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EDITOR’S NOTE

ThreeSCORE and fourteen years ago, when New Jersey drafted a new State Constitution, delegates carefully debated the question of even or odd years for gubernatorial elections. Before then, New Jersey elected governors to three-year terms without the ability to serve two terms consecutively. Every other election was in an even year and every sixth governor’s race was in a presidential year. Sometimes New Jersey elected a President, a Governor and a United States Senator all in one year, along with a third of the Senate and the entire General Assembly.

The newly-elected governor at the time, Alfred E. Driscoll, advocated for odd-year state elections. “The importance of a gubernatorial election merits an election that will not be overshadowed by a national contest for the Presidency,” Driscoll told the delegates. “The problems confronting the State are frequently distinct from those confronting the nation.”

As Phil Murphy seeks to become the first Democratic governor since 1977 to win a second term – and as Jack Ciattarelli looks to become the third Republican to oust a Democratic governor since 1993 – here we’re, again, in the year after a presidential election, watching national issues and the man in the White House – and his immediate predecessor – loom large in a state election.

Murphy isn’t just bucking the historical trend of a blue state seemingly having a penchant for Republican governors, but he’s also trying to turn back the curse of the White House: the last five times partisan control of the White House changed hands, the other party won the New Jersey governor’s race. But we’re also looking at apples and oranges: New Jersey has one million more Democrats than Republicans, a registration edge that increased from 705,000 in 2009 and 357,000 in 1993.

The 1947 Constitution produced what is arguably the most powerful governorship in the nation. It also created the most powerful chief justice in the U.S.

And after decades of short-time, rotating state legislators, Donald DiFrancesco and Steve Sweeney became the most formidable legislative leaders in the country. Sweeney is the longest-serving legislative leader in New Jersey history.

For the first time, New Jersey skipped the decennial legislative redistricting after Covid delayed the certification of the 2020 U.S. Census. That means State Assembly members are running in their old districts for the sixth time.

New Jersey has relatively few competitive legislative districts left – three or four on a good day. No reasonable campaign watcher thinks control of the Senate or Assembly is at stake.

That goes to the enhanced power of legislative leaders in what has become a different “separate but equal” branch of government than the modern-day founding fathers had anticipated. In a perfect storm, Republicans would win 18 Senate seats while Democrats could wind up with as many as 29.

But Jersey-style perfect storms came after Watergate or Jim Florio taxing toilet paper and there is no real sign of seismic shifts this year. While Republican leadership will change next month for the first time in more than a decade, Sweeney and Speaker Craig Coughlin have already secured enough votes to remain in office until January 2024. This year marks the first time freeholders won’t be on the ballot.

They became county commissioners in January and 2021 is the first time someone will actually run for the newly-titled post. At least six legislators will not return to Trenton next year: Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg and State Sens. Kip Bateman and Chris Brown are retiring – Brown has already resigned – and Assemblywomen Serena DiMaso and BettyLou DeCroce lost GOP primaries. Valerie Vainieri Huttle lost a Senate primary.

Every year, voting begins earlier and earlier. More than 925,000 vote-by-mail ballots were issued by county clerks, and two weeks before Election Day, more than one-third of them were returned. For the first time, New Jersey has nine days of early, in-person voting.

Nobody’s betting against 100% turnout in Union City. If you voted by mail, track your ballot. Remember, if you don’t vote, you lose the ability to complain about the outcome of this election.

David Wildstein

The 2021 New Jersey Globe Voters Guide was written almost entirely by Joey Fox, who joined our team as a reporter in August. He is a superstar in the making and I’m incredibly grateful for his efforts.
The two candidates for Governor of New Jersey are decent men who have different views about how to lead the state.

Eight years ago, when Phil Murphy returned to New Jersey after a stint in Berlin as the U.S. Ambassador to Germany, he quietly and methodically plotted what was at the time an unlikely ascent to the Democratic nomination for governor.

Early on, it looked like Murphy had just a narrow path to winning against two candidates with more committed party support and not necessarily less money. But by the fall of 2016, Murphy ostensibly became the governor-elect of New Jersey: the leading candidates withdrew, Donald Trump became president, and Gov. Chris Christie’s approval ratings plummeted to the point where his own Lt. Governor never had a chance in the 2017 general election.

Now, Murphy is the favorite to become the first Democratic incumbent to win a second term since Brendan “One-Term” Byrne was re-elected 44 year ago.

After the first year of Murphy’s governorship, that too seemed improbable. A man who had never held elective office found navigating the legislature – two houses controlled by the Democratic Party – to be treacherous. He picked public fights with party leaders. For a while, it looked as though Murphy would become the first Democratic governor since Byrne to face a serious primary challenge. Most New Jerseyans didn’t really know who he was – grateful only that he wasn’t Christie.

A global health pandemic changed and defined Murphy’s governorship. His approval rating soared – and even as his personal job approvals came back to earth, New Jerseyans knew him and liked him. Murphy’s approval ratings on his handling of COVID-19 were 10 points higher than his regular job approval.

The Republican challenger, Jack Ciattarelli, seems more out of central casting when it comes to looking like a New Jersey Governor. Four years ago, Murphy’s campaign team celebrated his loss in the GOP primary, saying that he would have been much more formidable than Kim Guadagno in the general election.

In a blue state that elected Republicans in six of the last ten gubernatorial elections, Ciattarelli was the kind of moderate Republican who had done well in New Jersey in the past. He’s smart and likeable and works all the time.

As a Republican legislator, Ciattarelli was viewed unfavorably by the Christie administration. In 2016, he said he didn’t vote for Trump. Nevertheless, Democrats have attached Ciattarelli to Trump and Christie.

While Ciattarelli was always the front runner for 2021 – he has been running almost non-stop for four years – he wound up seeing the primary field cleared for him when the more conservative Doug Steinhardt dropped out of the race in January and Jon Bramnick decided not to run. With all of the lines and organization endorsements, Ciattarelli won a four-way Republican primary with 49% -- the same percentage as Murphy in the 2017 primary four years earlier after also running the line table.

Ciattarelli is banking on two things in his bid to upset Murphy: he needs the 27% of New Jersey who think Murphy did a bad job handling Covid to show up with exponentially greater intensity than the 62% who think he handled the pandemic well; and he needs Democrats in a post- Trump world to be lethargic in their turnout.

The narrow path for Ciattarelli might explain what looks like an unnatural move to the right. He could be threading the same kind of needle that Trump was able to do in Pennsylvania and Michigan in 2016 – a strategy Hillary Clinton’s campaign swore wouldn’t work, right up until it did.

There are some mathematical realities in this race: even if Ciattarelli can pull off the 2009 Christie formula of Ocean + Monmouth > than Essex + Hudson, the Republican candidate will still need to replicate some other things from their victory twelve years ago when Christie came out of Bergen + Middlesex just 1,196 votes down. In that race, Christie won Morris County by 46,499, Somerset by 22,392 and Gloucester by 2,749. Joe Biden won all three of those counties last year.

Murphy essentially has two opponents in this election: one is Ciattarelli, which plays into the “a win is a win is a win” thing; and the other is the expectations game. He won his first race by 14 points with voters not really knowing who he was. Simply skating by, say by a margin of five points, won’t necessarily give him a mandate to govern. Funny as it seems, people stopped talking about Bill Bradley as a presidential candidate when his 47-point lead became 50%-47% on Election Day 1990.

Regardless of the outcome of this election, New Jersey Democrats will be seeking a new standard bearer for 2025. That race has already begun.
PHIL MURPHY.
PHOTO BY Kevin Sanders for the New Jersey Globe

JACK CIATTARELLI.
PHOTO BY Kevin Sanders for the New Jersey Globe
ONLY A FEW short years ago, Democrats held all three of the 1st district’s seats, and could count on resounding majorities in the district nearly every year they ran. This dominance was powered by then-Democrat Jeff Van Drew (R-Dennis), a popular moderate who represented the district for 16 years and served as the de facto leader of the Democratic slate.

But when Van Drew left for Congress in 2019, the party began to run into trouble in a district that had voted for Donald Trump in 2016 (and would do so again in 2020). As the 2019 campaign cycle wore on, all three incumbents – State Sen. Bob Andrzejczak (D-Middle) and Assemblymen Bruce Land (D-Vineland) and Matt Milam (D-Vineland) – seemed to be in danger of losing. Their attempts to continue running as the “Van Drew Team,” even with the former senator absent from the ticket (and soon to switch parties), were proving ineffective.

And, ultimately, lose they did. Now, with the victorious Republican challengers seeking to defend the seat, Democrats seem pessimistic that this will be the cycle they return the 1st district into their column. State Sen. Michael Testa (R-Vineland) is undoubtedly the leader of the ticket, with some Republicans foreseeing him becoming the seat’s next Van Drew and forging a distinct personal brand in the district.

The grandson of a former Vineland mayor and the chair of the Cumberland County Republican Party, Testa has a base of support in the district’s largest and most Democratic city. He’s also secured seats on the Budget & Appropriations and Judiciary Committees, the two most influential committees in the Senate, and is increasingly being mentioned as a gubernatorial candidate down the road.

On the Assembly side, Assemblyman Antwan McClellan (R-Ocean City) also has the potential makings of a rising Republican star. A former Ocean City councilman and currently the only Black Republican serving in the legislature, McClellan was on the shortlist to be Jack Ciattarelli’s lieutenant gubernatorial choice, but was ultimately passed over in favor of former State Sen. Diane Allen.

Assemblyman Erik Simonsen (R-Lower) is less prominent, but as the former mayor of Lower, he provides geographic diversity and political connections in the district’s southern reaches.

The incumbents face a trio of relatively untested Democrats – Yolanda Garcia Balicki for the Senate, John Capizola and Julia Hankerson for the Assembly – who have yet to attract the kind of attention and fundraising likely needed to make the district competitive. In an indication of Democratic recruitment struggles, Hankerson has only been on their slate since late August, replacing Christopher Wilson.

The 1st district is still close enough on a federal level, and has enough of a Democratic history downballot, that it hasn’t completely disappeared from the playing field. But though there may be a time when Democrats return to power in the district, it’s unlikely to be this year.

1ST DISTRICT
INCUMBENTS MICHAEL TESTA, ANTWAN MCCLELLAN, ERIK SIMONSEN

NJ-1
Counties: Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland
Atlantic: Corbin City, Estell Manor, Weymouth
Cape May: Avalon, Cape May, Cape May Point, Dennis, Lower, Middle, North Wildwood, Ocean City, Sea Isle City, Stone Harbor, Upper, West Cape May, West Wildwood, Wildwood, Wildwood Crest, Woodbine
Cumberland: Commercial, Downe, Fairfield, Greenwich, Hopewell, Lawrence, Maurice River, Millville, Shiloh, Stow Creek, Vineland
2021 SENATE:  *MICHAEL TESTA // YOLANDA GARCIA BALICKI
2021 ASSEM:  *ANTWAN MCCLELLAN, *ERIK SIMONSEN // JOHN CAPIZOLA, JULIA HANKERSON // MICHAEL GALLO, JACOB SELWOOD

2020 PRES:  TRUMP 53.0% // BIDEN 46.0%
2017 GOV:  MURPHY 50.2% // GUADAGNO 49.8%
2016 PRES:  TRUMP 52.8% // CLINTON 43.9%
2012 PRES:  OBAMA 52.6% // ROMNEY 46.4%
2019 SENATE:  TESTA 53.4% // *ANDRZEJCZAK 46.6%
2017 SENATE:  *VAN DREW 65.6% // GRUCCIO 34.4%
2019 ASSEM:  SIMONSEN 27.1%, MCCLELLAN 26.1% // *LAND 23.6%, *MILAM 23.1%

VOTER REG:  DEMOCRATIC 29.9%, REPUBLICAN 33.1%, UNAFFILIATED 35.4%
POPULATION:  216,124 (-16,101)
RACE:  65.5% WHITE, 9.3% BLACK, 19.7% HISPANIC, 1.2% ASIAN

TESTA:  STATE SENATOR, 2020-, CUMBERLAND CO. GOP CHAIRMAN, LAW PARTNER
BALICKI: ATTORNEY, SR PAROLE BOARD HEARING OFFICER, 1982-2015

MCCLELLAN:  STATE ASSEMBLYMAN, 2020-
SIMONSEN:  STATE ASSEMBLYMAN, 2020-, MAYOR OF LOWER TOWNSHIP, 2017-19
CAPIZOLA:  PHYSICAL EDUCATOR TEACHER, OWNER, MULCH MAN LLC
HANKERSON:  OWNER, WOODBINE WELLNESS CENTER, FORMER DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES OFFICIAL

SENATE RATING: LIKELY R
ASSEMBLY RATING: LIKELY R
EW THINGS are certain in New Jersey politics, but the 2nd legislative district’s competitiveness is one of them.

The Atlantic County-based district is one of only three in the state with split control between the Senate and Assembly, and even more remarkably hosted the only election in recent memory where two seats flipped at once in opposite directions.

Indeed, no other district in the state has split their tickets more frequently than the 2nd.

The district’s current status quo of Republican senator and Democratic assemblymen was established in 2017.

That cycle, then-Assemblyman Chris Brown (R-Ventnor) ran for Senate against appointed incumbent State Sen. Colin Bell (D-Margate), replacing the late State Sen. Jim Whelan (D-Atlantic City). Brown won by seven points, but the price for Republicans was that the seat elected two Democrats to the Assembly in his wake: Assemblyman Vince Mazzeo (D-Northfield), who had served since 2014, and newly elected Assemblyman John Armato (D-Buena Vista).

While Mazzeo ran strongly in 2019, the margin for Armato was much tighter.

Brown was appointed this past summer to the Murphy administration, setting up one of the most competitive races of 2021: the Senate contest between Mazzeo and appointed State Sen. Vince Polistina (R-Egg Harbor), a former assemblyman.

The race has been a brutal one, with Polistina hitting Mazzeo for previous cycles’ debate flubs while Mazzeo casts Polistina as rich and out-of-touch.

A further wrinkle is Polistina’s in-limbo incumbency; since the legislature hasn’t been called into session since he was chosen at a Republican convention, Polistina hasn’t been formally sworn in, but he insists he’s the district’s duly elected senator.

Unusually for New Jersey legislative races, where Senate races typically draw the biggest names, both parties also have heavy hitters running for the Assembly.

Democrats have Armato running for re-election alongside Atlantic County Commissioner Caren Fitzpatrick, who’s been elected countywide and some think may emerge as a stronger candidate even than Armato.

Republicans, meanwhile, are running former Atlantic City Mayor Don Guardian and former Deputy Attorney General Claire Swift, both of whom are known quantities in the area even if they haven’t run districtwide before. If Guardian wins, he’d have the added distinction of likely being the legislature’s only openly gay member.

With six eminently capable candidates running this November, anything could happen; one party could make a clean sweep, both parties could hold onto their own seats, or there could even be a 2017 repeat that sees each party flip something from the other.

Ticket-splitting may have declined in the state overall, but the 2nd district has shown few signs of abandoning its perennially competitive ways, and each of its three seats is looking like a fight to the end.

2ND DISTRICT
INCUMBENTS VINCE POLISTINA (NOT SEATED)
JOHN ARMATO, VINCE MAZZEO

NJ-2
Counties: Atlantic
Atlantic: Absecon, Atlantic City, Brigantine, Buena, Buena Vista, Egg Harbor City, Egg Harbor Township, Folsom, Hamilton, Linwood, Longport, Margate City, Mullica, Northfield, Pleasantville, Somers Point, Ventnor City
2021 SENATE: *VINCE POLISTINA // VINCE MAZZEO
2021 ASSEM: *JOHN ARMATO, CAREN FITZPATRICK // DON GUARDIAN, CLAIRE SWIFT

2020 PRES: BIDEN 54.7% // TRUMP 44.0%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 58.7% // GUADAGNO 41.3%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 54.2% // TRUMP 42.7%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 60.0% // ROMNEY 39.1%
2017 SENATE: BROWN 53.5% // *BELL 46.5%
2019 ASSEM: *MAZZEO 26.7%, *ARMATO 25.2% // RISLEY 24.1%, GUENTHER 24.1%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 37.2%, REPUBLICAN 26.4%, UNAFFILIATED 35.1%
POPULATION: 216,156 (-16,069)
RACE: 51.0% WHITE, 16.0% BLACK, 20.7% HISPANIC, 8.1% ASIAN

POLISTINA: STATE SEN-ELECT ’21-, STATE ASSEM ’08-12, OWNER, POLISTINA AND ASSOC
MAZZEO: STATE ASSEM 2014-, ASSEM ST./LOCAL GOV’T COMM CHAIR, 2018-, MAYOR
FITZPATRICK: ATLANTIC CO. COMM-AT LRG, 2018-, DIR. OF FIN AND ADMIN, MEET AC
GUARDIAN: MAYOR OF ATLANTIC CITY, 2014-17, BUS ADMIN OF TOMS RIVER, 2018-20,
ADMIN, ATLANTIC CITY SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT, 1992-2012
SWIFT: PARTNER, SWIFT LAW FIRM LLC, 2003,
DEPUTY STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL, 2000-03
LAW CLERK, ATLANTIC-CAPE MAY CO COURT, 1999-2000

SENATE RATING: TOSS UP
ASSEMBLY RATING: TOSS UP
3RD DISTRICT

INCUMBENTS STEVE SWEENEY,
JOHN BURZICHELLI, ADAM TALIAFERRO

The home of the country’s all-time most expensive state legislative race is looking like less of a showdown this cycle, with State Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-West Deptford) seeking to defend the Trump-won 3rd district from a trio of relatively unheralded Republicans.

Sweeney, first elected to the Senate in 2001 after defeating Democrat-turned-Republican Raymond Zane, is currently serving his 12th year as Senate President – longer than any previous legislative leader in New Jersey history.

After winning relatively close re-elections in 2011 and 2013, Sweeney was targeted heavily in 2017 by an unusual alliance of state Republicans and the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), an ally of Gov. Phil Murphy that usually supports Democrats. The teachers’ union funneled colossal sums towards Republican Fran Grenier, who ultimately had close to $5 million spent on his behalf.

But the Senate President was not to be caught napping. He and his allies overwhelmed Grenier with a colossal $13.8 million in spending, and he won by a lopsided 59-41% margin.

In 2021, he faces 2019 Assembly nominee Ed Durr, a commercial truck driver. Durr came in fourth in 2019, behind both Democratic incumbents and fellow Republican Beth Sawyer.

Along for the ride are Assemblyman John Burzichelli (D-Paulsboro) – a former Paulsboro mayor who’s served in the legislature since 2002, has been a Deputy Speaker since 2006, and became Appropriations Chair in 2012 – and Assemblyman Adam Taliaferro (D-Woolwich), who rose from Gloucester County Freeholder to Assemblyman in a 2015 special election.

Taliaferro in particular has an interesting background outside of politics. In 2000, Taliaferro suffered a severe spinal cord injury while playing for the Penn State football team, and was given a 3% chance of walking again. But Taliaferro overcame the challenge, eventually beginning his political career.

Though neither Burzichelli nor Taliaferro command nearly the same outsized influence Sweeney does, both have proven themselves able to win solid majorities in the district even when Sweeney isn’t himself on the ballot. This year, they face their 2019 foe Sawyer alongside Bethanne McCarthy-Patrick.

Given that Donald Trump won the district twice, some caution is warranted for Democrats, especially with a Democratic president in the White House. But most Republicans seem to think that Sweeney’s hold on the district won’t be broken until the man himself retires or runs for governor.

If and when that happens, the 3rd district may well become a marquee race. For now, Democrats remain in the driver’s seat.
2021 SENATE: *STEVE SWEENEY // EDWARD DURR
2021 ASSEM: *JOHN BURZICHELLI, *ADAM TALIAFERRO // BETHANNE PATRICK, BETH SAWYER

2020 PRES: TRUMP 50.0% // BIDEN 48.5%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 54.3% // GUADAGNO 45.7%
2016 PRES: TRUMP 49.8% // CLINTON 46.3%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 55.0% // ROMNEY 43.7%
2017 SENATE: *SWEENEY 58.8% // GRENIER 41.2%
2019 ASSEM: *BURZICHELLI 27.9%, *TALIAFERRO 27.1% // RISLEY 23.1%, GUENTHER 21.9%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 36.1%, REPUBLICAN 25.8%, UNAFFECTED 36.6%
POPULATION: 233,238 (+1,013)
RACE: 65.3% WHITE, 13.1% BLACK, 14.9% HISPANIC, 2.0% ASIAN

SWEENEY: SEN. PRES., 2010-, STATE SEN. 2002-, GLOUCESTER CO. FREEHOLDER, 1997-2010 VICE PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF IRON WORKERS
DURR: ASSEMBLY NOMINEE, 2019, COMMERCIAL TRUCK DRIVER

BURZICHELLI: STATE ASSEMBLYMAN, 2002-, APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR, 2012-
PATRICK: MANNINGTON TOWNSHIP BOA MEMBER, FIREFIGHTER AND EMT
SAWYER: ASSEMBLY NOMINEE, 2019, WOOLWICH LAND USE BOARD MEMBER REALTOR, SAWYER REALTY GROUP

SENATE RATING: LIKELY D
ASSEMBLY RATING: LIKELY D
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MORE THAN a decade ago, the 4th district was home to one of the state’s great legislative upsets, when Domenick DiCicco (R-Franklin) won by only 602 votes for an open Assembly seat.

But DiCicco was redistricted into the 3rd district in 2011, and 4th district Democrats haven’t faced any close calls since.

The current trio of legislators – State Sen. Fred Madden (D-Washington), Assemblyman Paul Moriarty (D-Washington), and Assemblywoman Gabriela Mosquera (D-Gloucester City) – has been in place since 2012, and all three are running for re-election this year.

Madden, who narrowly flipped the district’s Senate seat in 2003, is running against 2019 Republican Assembly nominee Stephen Pakradooni.

Moriarty, elected in 2005, and Mosquera, elected in 2012 after a complicated residency battle, will face electrical worker Denise Gonzalez and marketing consultant Patricia Kline; Nicholas Magner is also running on the Libertarian line.

The competitive races of the 4th district’s past are, by now, a redistricting cycle and several political eons away.

This year, Madden, Moriarty, and Mosquera have little reason to worry.
2021 SENATE: *FRED MADDEN // STEPHEN PAKRADOONI
2021 ASSEM: *PAUL MORIARTY, *GABRIELA MOSQUERA // DENISE GONZALEZ, PATRICIA KLINE // NICHOLAS MAGNER

2020 PRES: BIDEN 56.7% // TRUMP 42.0%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 62.2% // GUADAGNO 37.8%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 54.6% // TRUMP 42.2%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 61.1% // ROMNEY 37.9%

2017 SENATE: *MADDEN 100.0%
2019 ASSEM: *MORIARTY 29.9%, *MOSQUERA 29.4% // DILKS 21.0%, PAKRADOONI 19.7%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 43.8%, REPUBLICAN 21.0%, UNAFFILIATED 33.9%

POPULATION: 231,008 (-1,217)
RACE: 61.7% WHITE, 19.5% BLACK, 10.7% HISPANIC, 3.6% ASIAN
STATE SEN. Nilsa Cruz-Perez (D-Barrington), who had the distinction of being the first Latina elected to the Assembly back in 1995, is running for re-election six years after first winning the seat in a special election to replace now-Rep. Donald Norcross (D-Camden).

Her running mates are both legislative newcomers named William: Assemblyman Bill Moen (D-Camden), a former county freeholder elected in 2019 to replace Assemblywoman Patricia Egan Jones (D-Barrington); and Assemblyman William Spearman (D-Camden), a former Camden city councilman elected in a 2018 special election after Assemblyman Arthur Barclay (D-Camden) resigned in disgrace. Spearman is currently a Deputy Majority Whip.

Cruz-Perez’s Republican opponent, Clyde Cook, is a former Democratic councilman in Woodlynne who lost his 2020 re-election bid after being charged with assaulting a police officer. Despite this intriguing past, Cook and his running mates, attorney Samuel DiMatteo and IT administrator Sean Sepsey, don’t stand a chance of denting the 5th district’s Democratic delegation this November.

Like much of South Jersey, the 5th district is trending distinctly Republican on a federal level, with Democratic presidential margins falling from 40 points in 2012 to only 26 in 2020.

But, of course, a 26-point margin is still plenty formidable, and the huge margins Democrats consistently get out of Camden will prevent Republican successes in the 5th district for the foreseeable future. The 5th district has never before elected a Republican to the legislature since its creation in 1973 – the year that the last Republican from the City of Camden, State Sen. Frank Italiano retired – and it won’t start now.

**Counties:** Camden, Gloucester

**Camden:** Audubon, Audubon Park, Barrington, Bellmawr, Brooklawn, Camden, Gloucester City, Haddon Heights, Lawnside, Magnolia, Mount Ephraim, Runnemeade, Woodlynne

**Gloucester:** Deptford, Harrison, Mantua, Wenonah, Westville, Woodbury

**Senate Rating:** Solid D

**Assembly Rating:** Solid D
2021 SENATE: *NILSA CRUZ-PEREZ // CLYDE COOK
2021 ASSEM: *BILL MOEN, *WILLIAM SPEARMAN // SAMUEL DIMATTEO, SEAN SEPSEY

2020 PRES: BIDEN 62.3% // TRUMP 36.3%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 66.5% // GUADAGNO 33.5%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 62.9% // TRUMP 33.9%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 69.4% // ROMNEY 29.5%

2017 SENATE: *CRUZ-PEREZ 66.1% // WALKER 32.9% // KABIR 1.0%
2019 ASSEM: *SPEARMAN 34.0%, MOEN 32.8% // KUSH 16.8%, EHRET 16.4%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 46.2%, REPUBLICAN 16.2%, UNAFFILIATED 36.1%

POPULATION: 221,612 (-10,613)
RACE: 50.7% WHITE, 19.3% BLACK, 23.3% HISPANIC, 3.0% ASIAN
BUCKING TRENDS in the rest of the Camden area, the suburban 6th district has grown more Democratic in recent years, most recently giving Joe Biden a 36-point victory – far larger than his margin in the 5th district, which includes Camden proper.

For the 6th district’s Democratic legislators, State Sen. James Beach (D-Voorhees), Assemblyman Louis Greenwald (D-Voorhees), and Assemblywoman Pamela Lampitt (D-Cherry Hill), the shifts have meant their already secure seat has become even safer.

Greenwald, the Assembly Majority Leader since 2012, is the only one of the three who experienced the 6th district’s more competitive era. He defeated Republican Assemblyman (and now-Supreme Court Justice) Lee Solomon (R-Haddonfield) in 1995, and hasn’t been in a close election since.

Lampitt, one of several Deputy Speakers, joined Greenwald in 2005; Beach, a former longtime Camden County Clerk and current Assistant Senate Majority Leader, won a special election in 2008 for the district’s Senate seat after State Sen. John Adler (D-Cherry Hill) won a seat in Congress.

Greenwald is now the Dean of the New Jersey Legislature.

Beach’s Republican opponent this year is Cherry Hill Fire Department CFO John Foley, while Greenwald and Lampitt’s are IT developer Ed Farmer and New Jersey Better Business Bureau vice chairman Richard Super.

Recent Republican growth in white working-class areas and heavily nonwhite cities is good news for the party in much of South Jersey, but not so in the 6th district. Cherry Hill is sticking with the Democratic Party, and Beach, Greenwald, and Lampitt can breathe easy.

NJ-6
Counties: Burlington, Camden
Burlington: Maple Shade
Camden: Berlin Township, Cherry Hill, Collingswood, Gibbsboro, Haddon, Haddonfield, Hi-Nella, Merchantville, Oaklyn, Pennsauken, Somerdale, Stratford, Tavistock, Voorhees

SENATE RATING: SOLID D
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID D
2021 SENATE: *JAMES BEACH // JOHN FOLEY
2021 ASSEM: *LOUIS GREENWALD, *PAMELA LAMPITT // ED FARMER, RICHARD SUPER

2020 PRES: BIDEN 67.3% // TRUMP 31.4%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 68.2% // GUADAGNO 31.8%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 64.4% // TRUMP 32.1%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 64.2% // ROMNEY 34.7%

2017 SENATE: *BEACH 69.4% // SHAPIRO 30.6%
2019 ASSEM: *GREENWALD 34.8%, *LAMPITT 33.9% // PLUCINSKI 15.8%, PAPEIKA 15.5%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 47.0%, REPUBLICAN 17.7%, UNAFFILIATED 34.2%

POPULATION: 234,108 (+1,883)
RACE: 62.2% WHITE, 10.1% BLACK, 13.3% HISPANIC, 10.3% ASIAN
ONCE UPON A TIME, Republicans held the 7th district Senate seat, with former Republican State Sen. Diane Allen defying every conceivable trend and winning in landslides even as the district voted overwhelmingly for Democratic presidents and elected two Democrats to the Assembly.

Those halcyon days ended when Allen announced her retirement in 2017, and Republicans have had little hope of winning the district since then. Then-Assemblyman Troy Singleton (D-Delran) flipped the Senate seat that year by a whopping 30 points, and a significantly closer race this year against Republican Michelle Arnold, the former mayor of Palmyra, would be surprising.

Singleton is joined on the ticket by Assemblyman Herb Conaway (D-Moorestown), who’s represented the seat since 1998, and his direct successor, Assemblywoman Carol Murphy (D-Mount Laurel), a Deputy Majority Leader in the Assembly.

Murphy was nicknamed “the Bear” by the Burlington County Times when she foiled Mount Laurel Republicans’ attempts to move last year’s local elections to May from November. Her gambit proved successful: with the unpopular Donald Trump on the ballot, Republicans lost their majority on the Mount Laurel Council.

Conaway and Murphy will face Republicans Douglas Dillon and Joseph Jesuele, a retired Department of Transportation official and a pharmacist, respectively.

Even with Allen back on the ticket as Jack Ciattarelli’s running mate, Gov. Phil Murphy will perform well in Burlington County barring a major disaster, and the 7th district’s legislators are unlikely to fare much worse.

The county may have once been a backbone of the New Jersey GOP coalition, but it’s now firmly Democratic, especially in the diverse municipalities along the Delaware River that the 7th district covers.
2021 SENATE: *TROY SINGLETON // MICHELLE ARNOLD
2021 ASSEM: *HERB CONAWAY, *CAROL MURPHY // DOUGLAS DILLON, JOSEPH JESUELE

2020 PRES: BIDEN 65.1% // TRUMP 33.7%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 63.6% // GUADAGNO 36.4%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 61.6% // TRUMP 35.0%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 63.7% // ROMNEY 35.3%

2017 SENATE: SINGLETON 65.7% // BROWNE 34.3%
2019 ASSEM: *MURPHY 37.7%, *CONAWAY 37.5% // MILLER 22.7% // COOLEY 2.2%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 45.1%, REPUBLICAN 21.5%, UNAFFILIATED 32.2%

POPULATION: 230,129 (-2.0%)
RACE: 57.2% WHITE, 21.9% BLACK, 8.5% HISPANIC, 6.3% ASIAN
LOOK NO farther: the 8th district is the most dramatic, most competitive, and most interesting race in the state in 2021.

On the Democratic side, there’s State Sen. Dawn Addiego (D-Evesham). A former assemblywoman, she was elected as a Republican for a decade before switching to the Democratic Party in 2019, citing the rightward swing of the Republican Party and her desire to become more than just “loyal opposition.”

Joining her are Mark Natale, who’s back for a second try at the Assembly after putting forward a decent showing in 2019, and Lenape Regional High School District Board of Education member Allison Eckel.

Republicans, meanwhile, are runningAssemblywoman and former Burlington County Sheriff Jean Stanfield (R-Southampton) for the State Senate, alongside Hammonton Councilman Michael Torrissi and Acting Manchester Township Administrator Brandon Umba for Assembly.

Back in 2017, Addiego – who had won the seat unopposed in 2011 and was re-elected in a landslide in 2013 – came close to losing in an upset to Democrat George Youngkin, who was not seen as one of Democrats’ top prospects that cycle.

(Youngkin later ran for Burlington County Commissioner, suspended his campaign when it was revealed he had violent interactions with his ex-wife, and won the seat anyway, resigning immediately after taking office.)

Perhaps sensing that her close victory would not be an aberration, Addiego switched parties only a year into her third term, counting on the district’s leftward momentum under the modern Republican Party to keep her political career afloat.

But even as they have experienced overwhelming success in Burlington County on the presidential and congressional level, Democrats still haven’t proven they can win the 8th legislative district. They tried in 2019, spending hundreds of thousands to defeat Stanfield and Assemblyman Ryan Peters (R-Hainesport) but narrowly falling short.

Now, this November, each party has something to prove. Democrats want a legislative victory to show for the money and effort they’ve invested, and they want to demonstrate that joining their side pays dividends. Republicans, on the other hand, want to reaffirm their dominance in the district and show the consequences of spurning them.

Everyone involved seems to think that, if there’s any race that is the definitive legislative election of 2021, it’s happening in the 8th district. Democrats have so far run two different ads slamming Stanfield on tax issues, the Republican faithful are more energized than ever by Addiego’s betrayal, and both sides are pouring in money.

In a district that has proven remarkably amenable to both parties, and featuring a head-to-head between two of Burlington County’s most formidable politicians, rarely has a toss-up rating been so clearly earned.
2021 SENATE: *DAWN ADDIEGO // JEAN STANFIELD
2021 ASSEM: MICHAEL TORRISSI, BRANDON UMBA // ALLISON ECKEL, MARK NATALE

2020 PRES: BIDEN 52.7% // TRUMP 45.9%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 51.2% // GUADAGNO 48.8%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 49.3% // TRUMP 46.9%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 53.1% // ROMNEY 45.8%
2017 SENATE: *ADDIEGO 52.2% // BROWNE 47.8%
2019 ASSEM: STANFIELD 25.3%, *PETERS 25.2% // LAPLACA 24.5%, NATALE 23.7% // GIANGIULIO 1.3%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 33.9%, REPUBLICAN 29.3%, UNAFFILIATED 35.7%
POPULATION: 221,840 (-10,385)
RACE: NUMBERS

TORRISSI: HAMMONTON COUNCILMAN, 2015-21, OWNER, CORALUZZO/TORRISSI TRANSPORT
UMBA: ACTING MANCHESTER TOWNSHIP ADMIN, 2021-FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP ADMIN, 2021
ECKEL: LEANAPE REG. DIST. SCHOOL BRD MBR, MARKETING SPECIALIST, GARDEN ST. COUNCIL
NATALE: 2019 ASSEMBLY NOMINEE, ATTORNEY, LAW OFFICE OF LEO DUBLER,
   LAW CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT JUDGE JOSEPH RODRIGUEZ, EVESHAM DEMOCRATIC COUNTY COMMITTEE MAN
To the candidates who were successful - best wishes on a great tenure serving the residents of New Jersey.

To the candidates who were unsuccessful - I lost my first election by double digits - learn and move forward - Persevere towards the future!

Senator Vin Gopal
Majority Conference Leader
11th Legislative District
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WITH ITS newest member, Assemblywoman DiAnne Gove (R-Long Beach), being appointed in 2009, the 9th district has one of the legislature’s longest-serving trios, a distinction that is all but certain to continue in the next legislative session.

The district’s Senate seat is represented by State Sen. Christopher Connors (R-Lacey), who rose from the Assembly in 2008 to succeed his father, the late State Sen. Leonard Connors. The father-son duo had represented the seat together for nearly 20 years before the elder Connors announced his retirement.

Serving alongside Gove is Assemblyman Brian Rumpf (R-Little Egg Harbor), who was the mayor of Little Egg Harbor before being appointed to the Assembly in 2003. Gove and Rumpf also co-serve as policy co-chairs for Assembly Republicans.

Connors will face Democratic attorney David Wright, who came in fourth for a freeholder seat in 2019, and independent Regina Discenza; for the Assembly, Democrats are running attorney Kristen Henninger-Holland and disability advocate Alexis Jackson.

Though the 9th district includes the only two municipalities in Ocean County that voted for Joe Biden – South Toms River and Harvey Cedars – large Republican townships like Berkeley and Lacey keep the district firmly in the Republican column, and it hasn’t elected a Democrat since 1979.

Redistricting or retirements may one day shake the long-serving Connors-Gove-Rumpf triumvirate, but it won’t happen this cycle.

9TH DISTRICT INCUMBENTS CHRISTOPHER CONNORS, DIANNE GOVE, BRIAN RUMPF

Serving alongside Gove is Assemblyman Brian Rumpf (R-Little Egg Harbor), who was the mayor of Little Egg Harbor before being appointed to the Assembly in 2003. Gove and Rumpf also co-serve as policy co-chairs for Assembly Republicans.

Connors will face Democratic attorney David Wright, who came in fourth for a freeholder seat in 2019, and independent Regina Discenza; for the Assembly, Democrats are running attorney Kristen Henninger-Holland and disability advocate Alexis Jackson.

Though the 9th district includes the only two municipalities in Ocean County that voted for Joe Biden – South Toms River and Harvey Cedars – large Republican townships like Berkeley and Lacey keep the district firmly in the Republican column, and it hasn’t elected a Democrat since 1979.

Redistricting or retirements may one day shake the long-serving Connors-Gove-Rumpf triumvirate, but it won’t happen this cycle.

NJ-9

Counties: Atlantic, Burlington, Ocean
Atlantic: Galloway, Port Republic
Burlington: Bass River, Tabernacle, Washington
Ocean: Barnegat, Barnegat Light, Beach Haven, Beachwood, Berkeley, Eagleswood, Harvey Cedars, Lacey, Little Egg Harbor, Long Beach, Ocean Gate, Ocean Township, Pine Beach, Seaside Park, Ship Bottom, South Toms River, Stafford, Surf City, Tuckerton

SENATE RATING: SOLID R
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID R
2021 SENATE: *CHRISTOPHER CONNORS // DAVID WRIGHT // REGINA DISCENZA
2021 ASSEM: *DIANNE GOVE, *BRIAN RUMPF // KRISTEN HENNINGER-HOLLAND, ALEXIS JACKSON

2020 PRES: TRUMP 60.5% // BIDEN 38.1%
2017 GOV: GUADAGNO 62.2% // MURPHY 37.8%
2016 PRES: TRUMP 62.7% // CLINTON 34.1%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 55.0% // OBAMA 43.9%

2017 SENATE: *CONNORS 64.6% // WHITE 35.4%
2019 ASSEM: *RUMPF 34.5%, *GOVE 33.8% // COLLINS 16.4%, LEWIS 15.3%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 24.3%, REPUBLICAN 36.4%, UNAFFILIATED 37.9%

POPULATION: 235,539 (+3,314)
RACE: 81.0% WHITE, 3.6% BLACK, 9.1% HISPANIC, 2.7% ASIAN
WHILE IT may not contain Lakewood, both the fastest-growing and the most Republican municipality in the entire state, the Ocean County-based 10th district is still resoundingly GOP territory.

State Sen. Jim Holzapfel (R-Toms River) has represented the seat in one form or another since 1994, first in the Assembly and then in the Senate. His 2017 foe, mental health counselor Emma Mammano, is back for another round after losing by 25 points four years ago.

On the Assembly side, both Republican incumbents – Assemblymen Greg McGuckin (R-Toms River) and John Catalano (R-Brick) – are seeking re-election. McGuckin has served since 2012, replacing Holzapfel when he ran for Senate; Catalano, a former Brick councilman, succeeded longtime Assemblyman David Wolfe (R-Brick) when he retired in 2019.

Their Democratic opponents are Garrit “Tony” Kono and Mary “Sharon” Quilter, whom Republicans attempted to have booted from the ballot in April for insufficient signatures.

But the biggest threat to the 10th district’s Republican incumbents isn’t going to be Democrats, it’s their fellow Republicans in the 30th district.

With neighboring Lakewood’s population growing at an astounding rate, the 30th district will likely change significantly, forcing the 10th district to adjust around it. This could potentially result in drawing some of the 30th district incumbents’ hometowns into the 10th district, or drawing Brick or Toms River out of it.

If and when such a proposal does come out from the Legislative Apportionment Commission, the displaced Republicans will either have to make a deal with one another, run against each other, or move.

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10TH DISTRICT

**INCUMBENTS JIM HOLZAPFEL, JOHN CATALANO, GREGORY MCGUCKIN**

NJ-10

**Counties:** Ocean

**Ocean:** Bay Head, Brick, Island Heights, Lakehurst, Lavallette, Manchester, Mantoloking, Point Pleasant Beach, Seaside Heights, Toms River

**SENATE RATING:** SOLID R

**ASSEMBLY RATING:** SOLID R
2021 SENATE: *JIM HOLZAPFEL // EMMA MAMMANO
2021 ASSEM: *JOHN CATALANO, *GREGORY MCGUCKIN // TONY KONO, SHARON QUILTER

2020 PRES: TRUMP 60.6% // BIDEN 38.1%
2017 GOV: GUADAGNO 64.7% // MURPHY 35.3%
2016 PRES: TRUMP 64.1% // CLINTON 32.9%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 56.5% // OBAMA 42.5%

2017 SENATE: *HOLZAPFEL 62.5% // MAMMANO 37.5%
2019 ASSEM: *MCGUCKIN 31.4%, CATALANO 30.6% // DELLA VOLPE 18.4%, WHEELER 18.1% // BARRELLA 0.8%, HOLMES 0.7%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 24.1%, REPUBLICAN 36.1%, UNAFFILIATED 38.4%

POPULATION: 228,713 (-3,512)
RACE: 79.6% WHITE, 3.3% BLACK, 10.9% HISPANIC, 2.8% ASIAN
Perhaps no district better encapsulates Democratic gains in New Jersey than the 11th, which over the course of two cycles flipped from complete Republican control to Democratic domination. Now, with all three of their incumbents up for re-election, it’s up to Democrats to prove that they can hold onto their own gains in a Biden-won but still-swingy district.

In 2011, the district elected a trio of Republicans: State Sen. Jennifer Beck (R-Red Bank), Assemblywoman Caroline Casagrande (R-Colts Neck), and Assemblywoman Mary Pat Angelini (R-Ocean Township) – the first time in New Jersey history that a district elected three women legislators at once.

(Redistricting had significantly changed the 11th district in 2011, scrambling its representation; Beck, for example, served alongside now-State Sen. Declan O’Scanlon in the 12th district before the new map put them in separate districts.)

But in 2015, Democrats scored the upset of the cycle when Neptune Mayor Eric Houghtaling (D-Neptune) and former Deputy State Attorney General Joann Downey (D-Freehold) beat both Assembly Republicans by extremely narrow margins.

Bolstered by their unexpected victories, Democrats geared up to defeat Beck in 2017, with former Monmouth County Democratic Chair Vin Gopal (D-Long Branch) running as their Senate nominee. After a hard-fought and expensive battle, Gopal ousted the incumbent by a seven-point margin.

Gopal, the youngest member of the upper house, has enjoyed a meteoric rise in the Senate. He’s the Majority Conference Chairman and the chairman of the Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, where he didn’t hesitate to challenge the Murphy administration for their handling of state-run veterans homes during the coronavirus pandemic.

Some serious Democrats have touted Gopal as a future Governor, and he secured a seat on the Congressional Redistricting Commission.

Downey chairs the Assembly Human Services Committee and Houghtaling is the Assembly Agriculture Committee Chairman.

This cycle, their opponents don’t seem to be as strong as those they’ve faced in the past. Among Senate nominee Lori Annetta and Assembly nominees Kim Eulner and Marilyn Piperno, only Eulner holds elected office (as a Shrewsbury councilwoman), and none have shown notable fundraising abilities.

The campaign is still worth keeping an eye on, however; the Republican State Leadership Committee, a national Republican group dedicated to winning state offices, is spending $100,000 to aid Eulner and Piperno, and Republicans see the district as the state’s most competitive outside of the main playing field of the 2nd, 8th, and 16th.

If Downey or Houghtaling, or especially the personally popular Gopal, were to lose re-election, it would still come as a significant shock. The three incumbents have built up strong brands in the district and are well prepared for the campaign – in contrast to their opponents, who unexpectedly withdrew from their one scheduled debate. But the 11th district has hosted upsets before.

11TH DISTRICT INCUMBENTS VIN GOPAL, JOANN DOWNEY, ERIC HOUGHTALING

NJ-11

Counties: Monmouth

2021 SENATE: *VIN GOPAL // LORI ANNETTA
2021 ASSEM: *JOANN DOWNEY, *ERIC HOUGHTALING // KIMBERLY EULNER, MARILYN PIPERNO // DOMINIQUE FAISON

2020 PRES: BIDEN 55.2% // TRUMP 43.5%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 51.6% // GUADAGNO 48.4%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 51.7% // TRUMP 45.0%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 55.0% // ROMNEY 43.9%
2017 SENATE: GOPAL 53.6% // *BECK 46.4%
2019 ASSEM: *DOWNEY 26.6%, *HOUGHTALING 26.6% // AMOROSO 23.8%, WOOLLEY 23.0%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 34.6%, REPUBLICAN 24.8%, UNAFFILIATED 39.3%
POPULATION: 227,063 (-5,162)
RACE: 58.7% WHITE, 12.6% BLACK, 18.9% HISPANIC, 4.2% ASIAN

GOPAL: STATE SEN., 2018-, MILITARY/VETERANS AFFAIRS COMM. CHAIR, 2019, MNGR/PARTNER, DIRECT DEVELOPMENT LLC AND COMMUNITY MAG, ADJUNCT PROF, MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY
ANNETTA: SENIOR DIRECTOR, FIDELITY BROKERAGE SERVICES, FMR. FREEHOLD HIST. PRESERVATION COMM MEMBER
DOWNEY: STATE ASSEMBLY, 2016-, HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE CHAIR, 2018-, ASSEMBLY MAJ. PARLIAMENTARIAN, 2018-, DEPUTY STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL, TRIAL ATTORNEY
HOUGHTALING: STATE ASSEMBLYMAN, 2016-, AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE CHAIR, 2019
EULNER: SHREWSBURY BOROUGH COUNCILWOMAN, 2018-, SHREWSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL PRESIDENT, 2020
PIPERNO: N’TL ACADEMY OF SPORTS MED, NUTRITION COACH, COLTS NECK PARENT TEACHER ORG. MEMBER

SENATE RATING: LIKELY D
ASSEMBLY RATING: LEAN D
SPANNING four different counties, the 12th district is one of the state’s most awkward, created out of whole cloth in the 2011 redistricting cycle to mop up the municipalities left behind by other retooled districts.

The three Republicans who ran that cycle were similarly scattered: State Sen. Samuel Thompson (R-Old Bridge) came from the 13th district in Middlesex County, Assemblyman and Deputy Republican Leader Ronald Dancer (R-Plumsted) was previously elected to Ocean County’s 30th district, and Assemblyman Robert Clifton (R-Matawan) was then a freeholder in Monmouth County.

Despite their disparate beginnings, the team of Thompson, Dancer, and Clifton has sailed smoothly since then, avoiding competitive general elections for the entire decade.

To their credit, Democrats landed a good recruit to take on the 86-year-old Thompson in Matawan Mayor Joseph Altomonte, who has led the Monmouth County borough since 2016. He’s joined on the ticket by consultant Raya Arbiol and financial analyst Michael Palazzolla.

Still, Democrats would need to achieve an impressive level of crossover support to win in such a fundamentally conservative district. The district, given its odd collection of municipalities, could shift significantly after this year’s legislative commission draws a new map – but that will come too late for Altomonte and his running mates.

NJ-12

Counties: Burlington, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean
Burlington: Chesterfield, New Hanover, North Hanover, Wrightstown
Middlesex: Old Bridge
Monmouth: Allentown, Englishtown, Manalapan, Matawan, Millstone, Roosevelt, Upper Freehold
Ocean: Jackson, Plumsted

SENATE RATING: SOLID R
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID R
2021 SENATE: *SAMUEL THOMPSON // JOSEPH ALTOMONTE
2021 ASSEM: *ROBERT CLIFTON, *RONALD DANCER // RAYA ARBIOL, MICHAEL PALAZZOLLA

2020 PRES: TRUMP 56.1% // BIDEN 42.6%
2017 GOV: GUADAGNO 59.1% // MURPHY 40.9%
2016 PRES: TRUMP 57.0% // CLINTON 39.8%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 52.5% // OBAMA 46.4%

2017 SENATE: *THOMPSON 56.7% // LANDE 41.4% // ANTOINE 1.9%
2019 ASSEM: *DANCER 32.1%, CLIFTON 31.2% // LANDE 18.9%, GUHA 17.9%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 27.9%, REPUBLICAN 30.6%, UNAFFILIATED 40.2%

POPULATION: 230,971 (-1,254)
RACE: 70.7% WHITE, 5.3% BLACK, 11.8% HISPANIC, 8.4% ASIAN
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The 13th district has already hosted one dramatic election this year: the Republican primary between Assemblywoman Serena DiMaso (R-Holmdel), one of two Deputy Republican Whips, and Holmdel School Board President Vicky Flynn.

DiMaso’s falling out with Monmouth County GOP Chairman Shaun Golden cost her the party line, and while she still waged an active campaign for the seat, Flynn’s establishment support proved too much to overcome; DiMaso lost 36-27%. Flynn now joins State Sen. Declan O’Scanlon (R-Little Silver) and Assemblyman Gerard Scharfenberger (R-Middletown), both of whom supported her in the primary, on the general election ticket.

The general election has so far been less tumultuous. Democrats are staking their campaign on the issue of property tax reassessments, which Monmouth County does differently than the rest of the state – an issue that is helpfully separate from any obvious partisan battle lines. O’Scanlon has been a prominent supporter of the Monmouth County system, while his opponent, Vincent Solomeno, argues the county should realign with the state’s other counties.

But property tax assessments probably won’t be enough to push Solomeno or Assembly nominees Allison Friedman and Erin Howard over the top in the longtime Republican district. Barring a major upset, the 13th district’s residents – among them none other than Gov. Phil Murphy – will continue to be represented entirely by Republicans.

13TH DISTRICT
INCUMBENTS DECLAN O’SCANLON, SERENA DIMASO, GERARD SCHARFENBERGER

NJ-13
Counties: Monmouth

Monmouth: Aberdeen, Atlantic Highlands, Fair Haven, Hazlet, Highlands, Holmdel, Keansburg, Keyport, Little Silver, Marlboro, Middletown, Monmouth Beach, Oceanport, Rumson, Sea Bright, Union Beach

SENATE RATING: SOLID R
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID R
2021 SENATE: *DECLAN O’SCANLON // VINCENT SOLOMENO
2021 ASSEM: VICKY FLYNN, *GERARD SCHARFENBERGER // ALLISON FRIEDMAN, ERIN HOWARD

2020 PRES: TRUMP 52.1% // BIDEN 46.5%
2017 GOV: GUADAGNO 58.2% // MURPHY 41.8%
2016 PRES: TRUMP 55.1% // CLINTON 41.6%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 54.6% // OBAMA 44.3%

2017 SENATE: O’SCANLON 55.1% // LANDE 44.9%
2019 ASSEM: SCHARFENBERGER 29.8%, *DIMASO 29.2% // SINGER 20.6%, FRIEDMAN 20.5%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 27.7%, REPUBLICAN 30.8%, UNAFFILIATED 40.4%

POPULATION: 227,695 (-4,530)
RACE: 77.6% WHITE, 2.5% BLACK, 8.7% HISPANIC, 7.7% ASIAN
REPUBLICANS want you to believe that they’ll make the 14th district competitive this year; that state workers in Hamilton will rebel against Democratic hegemony; that Monroe’s working-class residents will tilt in their favor.

The voters of the 14th district likely have other plans. First elected in a 2010 special election, hardworking State Sen. Linda Greenstein (D-Plainsboro) quickly faced a bevy of competitive races: flipping the seat by eight points in 2010, retaining it by 10 points in 2011, and finally winning a full four-year term by only two points in 2013.

Greenstein is no stranger to tough campaigns: she ousted Democratic incumbents in 1999 and faced several competitive races before moving up to the Senate.

But since then, now-Assistant Majority Leader Greenstein and her running mates – Assemblyman Daniel Benson (D-Hamilton), Greenstein’s successor in the Assembly and the Deputy Conference Leader, and Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo (D-Hamilton), elected in 2007 and now a Deputy Assembly Speaker – have locked down the suburban district into their corner.

Last cycle, Benson and DeAngelo combined for 60% of the vote, while the Republican nominees got only 38%; a year later, Joe Biden won the district by 17 points. The odds are long for attorney Adam Elias, who’s running for the Senate, and Assembly nominees Andrew Pachuta and Bina Shah to significantly improve on that showing.

The support that Republicans could once get in suburban areas like Hamilton has been fading for a long time. Unless and until they can claw it back, districts like the 14th will remain out of reach.
2021 SENATE: *LINDA GREENSTEIN // ADAM ELIAS
2021 ASSEM: *DANIEL BENSON, *WAYNE DEANGELO // ANDREW PACHUTA, BINA SHAH // MICHAEL BOLLENTIN

2020 PRES: BIDEN 57.9% // TRUMP 40.8%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 53.6% // GUADAGNO 46.4%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 54.1% // TRUMP 42.5%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 57.5% // ROMNEY 41.4%

2017 SENATE: *GREENSTEIN 56.5% // SCHIRMER 43.5%
2019 ASSEM: *DEANGELO 30.4%, *BENSON 29.6% // CALABRESE 20.1%, SHAH 18.3% // BOLLENTIN 1.5%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 38.3%, REPUBLICAN 21.4%, UNAFFILIATED 39.0%

POPULATION: 234,184 (+1,959)
RACE: 54.6% WHITE, 8.3% BLACK, 15.4% HISPANIC, 18.6% ASIAN
OF ALL THE cities in New Jersey, few are quite so radioactively Democratic as Trenton. With a population that’s 90% Black and Hispanic, the capitol city gave Joe Biden 88% of the vote in 2020, versus a paltry 11% for Donald Trump.

The 15th district overall isn’t as blue as Trenton, but its other big municipalities like Ewing and Lawrence are also strongly Democratic, making any Republican run for the district a fool’s errand.

This year, the errand-runner is registered nurse Susan Gaul, who is challenging State Sen. Shirley Turner (D-Lawrence). Turner is by now a fixture in Mercer County politics, having represented the district since 1994 – first as an assemblywoman, then beginning in 1998 as a senator.

Turner’s Assembly counterparts are both far newer. Assemblywoman and Deputy Majority Leader Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (D-Trenton) filled State Treasurer Elizabeth Maher Muoio’s seat, while Assemblyman Anthony Verrelli (D-Hopewell) replaced Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora, both in 2018 special elections.

They face Republican Patricia Johnson, who is also a registered nurse, and Pedro Reyes of the Vote for Pedro Party.

Given how Democratic the district is today, it’s incredible that Trenton was represented by a Republican in the legislature as recently as 1997, when State Sen. Dick LaRossa (R-Ewing) lost his re-election bid to Turner by eight points.

Turner had to fight hard for that first term; she won’t need to do much to win this one.
2021 SENATE: *SHIRLEY TURNER // SUSAN GAUL
2021 ASSEM: *VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON, *ANTHONY VERRELLI // PATRICIA JOHNSON // PEDRO REYES

2020 PRES: BIDEN 75.1% // TRUMP 23.6%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 71.5% // GUADAGNO 28.5%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 73.3% // TRUMP 23.4%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 72.8% // ROMNEY 26.1%

2017 SENATE: *TURNER 74.0% // NEWTON 26.0%
2019 ASSEM: *REYNOLDS-JACKSON 39.2%, *VERRELLI 38.0% // WILLIAMS 16.0% // FORCHION 4.2%, WILLIAMS 2.6%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 49.3%, REPUBLICAN 13.5%, UNAFFILIATED 35.6%

POPULATION: 224,002 (-8,223)
RACE: 36.4% WHITE, 24.6% BLACK, 23.8% HISPANIC, 11.8% ASIAN
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As Jack Ciattarelli makes his spirited bid for governor, 16th district Republicans will be fighting valiantly to defend the Senate seat in the district he once represented.

For decades, the Somerset County-based 16th district was one of the state’s bastions of suburban Republicans, sending an all-Republican delegation to Trenton from its creation in 1973 well into the 21st century. Somerset County has not sent a Democrat to the Senate since 1903.

Things started to go wrong in 2011, when Democratic redistricting commissioners slyly put overwhelmingly Democratic Princeton and South Brunswick into the district. But despite such machinations, the district’s Republican tradition held.

That is, until Princeton University physicist Andrew Zwicker (D-South Brunswick) arrived on the scene in 2015, and took out Republican Assemblywoman Donna Simon (R-Readington) by a razor-thin 78-vote margin.

Zwicker served alongside Ciattarelli for two years, and when Ciattarelli waged an unsuccessful campaign for governor in 2017, Zwicker helped fellow Democrat Roy Freiman (D-Hillsborough) join him in the Assembly. That same year, State Sen. and Deputy Republican Whip Kip Bateman (R-Branchburg) shockingly won only 50.4-49.6% over Democrat Laurie Poppe.

Perhaps seeing the writing on the wall, Bateman is calling it quits this year, and the Senate seat he leaves behind is by far the best pickup opportunity for either party across the entire state. Zwicker is the Democratic nominee, and he’ll face a rather unusual opponent in former Rep. Michael Pappas (R-Branchburg), who served in Congress for one term from 1997 to 1999.

Freiman is joined on the Assembly slate by former Montgomery Mayor Sadaf Jaffer, who will be among the first-ever Asian American women to serve in the legislature if she wins. Their Republican opponents are Manville Councilman Joe Lukac and Readington Board of Education President Vinny Panico, both of whom are running serious campaigns.

Republicans can argue that Somerset County still has Republican DNA down-ballot, as proven by Batemen’s 2017 win. Yet the fact remains that, in each election from 2013 until today, legislative Democrats did better than in the previous cycle.

It’s certainly possible that Pappas, Lukac, and Panico will be the ones to break that streak. But Democrats are clearly in the driver’s seat in the 16th district, and there may be little Republicans can do anymore to dethrone them.

**NJ-16**

**Counties:** Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Somerset  
**Hunterdon:** Delaware, Flemington, Raritan, Readington, Stockton  
**Mercer:** Princeton  
**Middlesex:** South Brunswick  
**Somerset:** Branchburg, Hillsborough, Manville, Millstone, Montgomery, Rocky Hill, Somerville

**Senate Rating:** LEAN D  
**Assembly Rating:** LEAN D
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Michael Pappas // Andrew Zwicker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>Roy Freiman, Sadaf Jaffer // Joe Lukac, Vinny Panico</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Biden 60.1% // Trump 38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Murphy 53.1% // Guadagno 46.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Clinton 55.2% // Trump 40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Obama 53.1% // Romney 45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Bateman 50.4% // Poppe 49.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>Zwicker 28.1%, Freiman 26.9% // Caliguire 22.6%, Madrid 22.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Voter Reg:** Democratic 36.7%, Republican 24.7%, Unaffiliated 37.8%

**Population:** 233,626 (+1,401)

**Race:** 57.1% White, 4.7% Black, 10.7% Hispanic, 23.6% Asian

**Pappas:** U.S. Congres (NJ-12), ’97-99, Bridgewater Township Admin, 2019-, High Bridge Borough Admin, ’16-19, Somerset Co. Freeholder, ’84-96, Franklin Township Mayor, ’83-85

**Zwicker:** State Assemblyman, 2016-, Science Innovation/Technology Comm Chair, 2018-, Head of Communications, Plasma Physics Laboratory, Princeton University

**Freiman:** State Assemblyman, 2018-, Hillsborough Township Sustainability Committee, 2017, Vice President of Strategy and Analytics, Prudential Financial

**Jaffer:** Mayor of Montgomery Township, 2019-20, Montgomery Township Councilwoman, 2017-20, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Princeton University

**Lukac:** Manville Borough Councilman, 2018-, Manville GOP Municipal Chairman, Former Manville School Board Member, Supervisor, IBEW Local 102

**Panico:** Hunterdon Central Regional Board of Education President, Former Readington School Board Member, Commercial Hot Air Balloon Pilot
DEMOCRATS consistently win huge majorities in the Middlesex County-based 17th district, so the general election results this November aren’t really in question.

What’s more interesting is when the district’s all-white, all-male delegation – one of only two such Democratic legislative trios in the state – will start to align more with the district, which contains the main campus Rutgers University in New Brunswick along with several other highly diverse municipalities.

As of the 2020 Census, the district was only 27% non-Hispanic white, and yet the district hasn’t elected a person of color to office since Assemblyman Upendra Chivukula (D-Franklin) was nominated to a seat on the state Board of Public Utilities in 2014.

Among the district’s current legislators, State Sen. Bob Smith (D-Piscataway), a former Assemblyman, has served in the legislature since 1986, making him one of its longest-serving members; Assemblyman Joseph Egan (D-New Brunswick), meanwhile, is among the oldest legislators currently in office at age 83.

The district’s third legislator, Assemblyman Joe Danielsen (D-Franklin), was elected in 2015, succeeding Chivukula. Egan is a Deputy Majority Leader in the Assembly, and Danielsen is a Deputy Whip.

Given the longevity of its representatives and their apparent mismatch with the district’s demographics, the 17th district may see a major upheaval in the near future, but it won’t happen in 2021. Their Republican opponents – attorney James Abate for Senate, Rutgers ESL instructor Catherine Barrier and attorney Peter Gabra for Assembly – won’t be able to dislodge them in a district that’s never elected a Republican since its creation.
2021 **SENATE**: *BOB SMITH // JAMES ABATE
2021 **ASSEM**: *JOE DANIELSEN, *JOSEPH EGAN // CATHERINE BARRIER, PETER GABRA

2020 **PRES**: BIDEN 71.4% // TRUMP 27.3%
2017 **GOV**: MURPHY 69.3% // GUADAGNO 30.7%
2016 **PRES**: CLINTON 70.6% // TRUMP 26.2%
2012 **PRES**: OBAMA 72.2% // ROMNEY 26.5%

2017 **SENATE**: *SMITH 71.4% // KIPNIS 28.6%
2019 **ASSEM**: *EGAN 36.5%, *DANIELSEN 36.3% // BADOVINAC 13.6%, POWELL 13.6%

**VOTER REG**: DEMOCRATIC 47.6%, REPUBLICAN 12.2%, UNAFFILIATED 38.9%

**POPULATION**: 235,376 (+3,151)
**RACE**: 27.2% WHITE, 18.2% BLACK, 26.8% HISPANIC, 24.2% ASIAN
EDISON, the largest municipality in the 18th district, is hosting a competitive race for mayor this year, but that competitiveness likely won’t extend to its legislative races.

Once the legislative seat of gubernatorial nominee Barbara Buono, the 18th district is now represented by State Sen. Patrick Diegnan (D-South Plainfield), Assemblyman Robert Karabinchak (D-Edison), and Assemblyman Sterley Stanley (D-East Brunswick).

Diegnan, an attorney and former Assemblyman, succeeded Buono in the Assembly in 2001, and then won a special election in 2016 to replace State Sen. Peter Barnes III, who had been nominated to the Superior Court. He himself was succeeded by Karabinchak, a former Edison councilman and current Deputy Majority Whip.

The newest member of the delegation is Stanley, who is facing voters for the first time after winning a special election earlier this year to succeed Assemblywoman Nancy Pinkin (D-East Brunswick), now serving as Middlesex County Clerk.

Befitting Edison’s large Asian population, Stanley is currently one of three Asian American members of the legislature, though that number is near-certain to grow after this November.

Republican East Brunswick Mayor David Stahl managed to hold Democrats to a four-point Senate victory as recently as 2013, but Republicans this year are showing few signs of life. Firefighter Vihal Patel, realtor Angela Fam, and South Plainfield Councilwoman Melanie Mott are running on the Republican slate; they’re joined by Libertarian David Awad and independent Brian Kulas.
2021 SENATE: *PATRICK DIEGNAN // VIHAL PATEL
2021 ASSEM: *ROBERT KARABINCHAK, *STERLEY STANLEY // ANGELA FAM, MELANIE MOTT // DAVID AWAD // BRIAN KULAS

2020 PRES: BIDEN 60.6% // TRUMP 38.0%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 58.5% // GUADAGNO 41.5%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 58.6% // TRUMP 38.1%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 60.7% // ROMNEY 38.1%

2017 SENATE: *DIEGNAN 65.6% // GLOGOWER 34.4%
2019 ASSEM: *PINKIN 30.8%, *KARABINCHAK 29.7% // BENGIVENGA 20.2%, BROWN 19.2%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 45.0%, REPUBLICAN 16.5%, UNAFFILIATED 37.4%

POPULATION: 230,335 (-1,890)
RACE: 41.3% WHITE, 6.7% BLACK, 12.3% HISPANIC, 35.8% ASIAN
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IT’S RARE for a legislative district’s most prominent legislator to be an Assemblymember, but that’s indisputably the case in the 19th district, which Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin (D-South Amboy) has represented since 2010.

Coughlin wrested control of the Assembly Speakership from former Assemblyman Vincent Prieto (D-Secaucus) in 2017, and has already secured another term in the job for the 2022-23 legislative session.

He’s joined on the ticket by State Sen. Joe Vitale (D-Woodbridge), serving since 1998, and Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez (D-Perth Amboy), who succeeded former Assemblyman John Wisniewski (D-Sayreville) in 2018 after he embarked on a failed run for governor.

Though Republicans managed to briefly hold all three of the district’s seats in 1992 and 1993, they’re unlikely to be much of a factor this year.

Peter Pisar, who previously run for Middlesex County Sheriff and mayor of South Amboy, is the Republican nominee for Senate; his Assembly counterparts are Bruce Banko and Tony Gallo.

Coughlin’s two predecessors as Assembly Speaker ended up as lieutenant governor and CEO of the state Sports and Exposition Authority, but he might not settle for anything less than governor.
2021 SENATE: *JOSEPH VITALE // PETER PISAR
2021 ASSEM: *CRAIG COUGHLIN, *YVONNE LOPEZ // BRUCE BANKO, TONY GALLO

2020 PRES: BIDEN 59.0% // TRUMP 39.9%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 60.2% // GUADAGNO 39.8%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 59.6% // TRUMP 37.6%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 66.9% // ROMNEY 32.1%

2017 SENATE: *VITALE 100.0%
2019 ASSEM: *COUGHLIN 33.6%, *LOPEZ 32.1% // GENOVA 16.8%, ONUOHA 16.2% // CRUZ 1.3%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 44.6%, REPUBLICAN 14.8%, UNAFFILIATED 39.0%

POPULATION: 239,157 (+6,932)
RACE: 32.8% WHITE, 9.7% BLACK, 36.8% HISPANIC, 17.6% ASIAN
THE 20TH district was already home to easily the strangest primary of the 2021 cycle, so perhaps it’s fitting that voters won’t even get a choice on their representation this November; Republicans didn’t field a candidate for any of the district’s three seats.

Controversial anti-Vaxxer Assemblyman Jamel Holley (D-Roselle) is on his way out after waging a quixotic primary bid against State Sen. Joseph Cryan (D-Union). Cryan vastly outraised Holley and got the Union County Democratic line, while Holley’s main claim to fame was his ill-timed anti-vaccine activism; Holley lost by a punishing 62-34% margin.

Union County Democrats also endorsed Assemblywoman Annette Quijano (D-Elizabeth), currently serving as Majority Conference Leader, and Roselle Democratic chairman Reginald Atkins for the Assembly, and both crushed primary opponents running on Holley’s slate.

The Elizabeth-based 20th district hasn’t elected a Republican since it was created, but the lack of opponents means hell could freeze over and Cryan, Quijano, and Atkins would still win. With the primary behind them, all three are on a glide path to the Assembly – and can only hope they don’t draw the same kind of headlines as Holley.
2021 SENATE: *JOSEPH CRYAN
2021 ASSEM: REGINALD ATKINS, *ANNETTE QUIJANO

2020 PRES: BIDEN 73.7% // TRUMP 25.5%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 80.9% // GUADAGNO 19.1%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 77.4% // TRUMP 20.4%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 80.2% // ROMNEY 19.2%

2017 SENATE: *CRYAN 83.7% // HANNA 16.3%
2019 ASSEM: *QUIJANO 33.6%, *HOLLEY 32.1% // DONNELLY 16.8%, HANNA 16.2%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 57.2%, REPUBLICAN 9.4%, UNAFFILIATED 31.7%

POPULATION: 242,177 (+9,952)
RACE: 17.3% WHITE, 26.4% BLACK, 47.5% HISPANIC, 4.2% ASIAN
ON PAPER, the 21st district shouldn’t just be a competitive district – it should be solidly Democratic.

Joe Biden won the district in 2020 by an eye-popping 18 points, only eight years after Mitt Romney won it by six points. Even Phil Murphy carried the district in 2017, despite state politics often tending to lag significantly behind national swings.

But even as the 21st district’s voters have opted for statewide Democrats, they’ve stuck resolutely by legislative Republicans, who are among the most powerful Republicans in the state.

State Sen. Thomas Kean Jr. (R-Westfield), who’s retiring this year to focus on his second run for Congress, has been Senate Minority Leader since 2008. Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (R-Westfield) is leaving his post as Assembly Minority Leader to run for Kean’s seat.

Bramnick’s counterpart, Assemblywoman Nancy Muñoz (R-Summit), is currently his #2 as Republican Conference Leader, and has emerged as the frontrunner to succeed Bramnick as minority leader.

The trio has used their strong connections in the district and statewide to hold on even as the district has zoomed left. Democrats heavily targeted Muñoz and Bramnick in 2019 and still lost by several points.

This year, with Bramnick running for the Senate and Muñoz joined by New Providence Councilwoman Michele Matsikoudis on the Assembly slate, doesn’t seem to be as competitive, but stranger things have happened in New Jersey politics.

On one hand, Bramnick and Muñoz have both proven that they can win the district against powerful headwinds, Republicans have decisively outraised their Democratic opponents, and statewide groups aren’t acting like the race is among the state’s top tier.

On the other, the three Democratic candidates – Roselle Park Mayor Joe Signorello, National Organization for Women New Jersey President Anjali Mehrotra, and public school teacher Elizabeth Graner – aren’t pushovers, and Republicans can’t count on their incumbency and powerful legislative posts in quite the same way as in the past.

Bramnick is taking his race seriously, as is the fiercely loyal International Union of Operating Engineers Local 825. Starting as a councilman in Plainfield, Bramnick has always had a knack for making friends on the other side of the aisle.

If Democrats couldn’t flip the 21st district in previous cycles, it might be hard to see how they do it this cycle when they’re far more focused on other districts. But close races are likely the norm for 21st district Republicans now – that is, unless the Legislative Apportionment Commission, of which Bramnick and Kean are both members, work to nudge it towards their party.
2021 SENATE: JON BRAMNICK // JOE SIGNORELLO III
2021 ASSEM: MICHELE MATSIKOUDIS, *NANCY MUÑOZ // ELIZABETH GRANER, ANJALI MEHROTRA

2020 PRES: BIDEN 58.5% // TRUMP 40.1%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 51.0% // GUADAGNO 49.0%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 52.9% // TRUMP 43.4%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 52.4% // OBAMA 46.6%
2017 SENATE: *KEAN 54.7% // LAZARE 45.3%
2019 ASSEM: *BRAMNICK 26.0%, *MUÑOZ 25.4% // MANDELBLATT 23.6%, GUUNDERMAN 23.0%
   // MARKS 1.0%, PAPPAS 1.0%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 34.1%, REPUBLICAN 27.6%, UNAFFILIATED 37.6%
PUPULATION: 224,546 (-7,679)
RACE: 69.1% WHITE, 3.2% BLACK, 11.6% HISPANIC, 11.9% ASIAN

BRAMNICK: STATE ASSEM, 2003-, ASSEM MIN. LEADER, ’12-, WFLD GOP MUN CHAIR, PLAINFIELD
   CITY CONCL, ’84-91, PRTNR, BRAMNICK, RODRIGUEZ, GRABAS, ARNOLD
   AND MANGAN
SIGNORELLO: ROSELLE PARK MAYOR, 2019-, CEO, MAGIS CAPITAL PARTNERS
MATSIKOUDIS: NEW PROVIDENCE BOROUGH COUNCIL, 2020-, REALTOR,
   KELLER WILLIAMS REALTY, FORMER MORGAN STANLEY VICE PRESIDENT
MUÑOZ: STATE ASSEMBLY, 2009-, STATE ASSEM MINORITY WHIP, 2017-, REGISTERED NURSE
GRANER: BERNARDS DEMOCRATIC MUNICIPAL CHAIR, ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER,
   RAHWAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MEHROTRA: MOUNTAINIDE DEMOCRATIC MUNICIPAL CHAIR, PRESIDENT,
   NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN OF NEW JERSEY,
   FREELANCE GRAPHIC DESIGNER
ONCE HOME to former Gov. Donald DiFrancisco and, briefly, Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean, Jr. (R-Westfield), the 22nd district got significantly reshaped in 2001 redistricting, and has elected Democrats ever since.

The longest-serving member of the 22nd district’s delegation is State Sen. Nicholas Scutari (D-Linden), in office since 2004 and currently the powerful Senate Judiciary Chairman and Union County Democratic Chairman.

He was joined by Assemblyman James Kennedy (D-Rahway) in 2016, succeeding retiring Assemblywoman Linda Stender (D-Fanwood), and by Assemblywoman Linda Carter (D-Plainfield) in 2018 after the death of long-serving Assemblyman Jerry Green (D-Plainfield).

Plainfield GOP municipal chair William Michelson is Republicans’ nominee for Senate, alongside Assembly nominees Hans Herberg and David Sypher.

Even after 2001 redistricting added Democratic strongholds like Plainfield and Linden, Assembly Democrats still faced a close call in 2009.

They’ve won by convincing margins in the decade since, however, and seem destined to do it again in 2021.
2021 SENATE: *NICHOLAS SCUTARI // WILLIAM MICHELSON
2021 ASSEM: *LINDA CARTER, *JAMES KENNEDY // HANS HERBERG, DAVID SYPHER

2020 PRES: BIDEN 66.6% // TRUMP 32.3%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 65.6% // GUADAGNO 34.4%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 64.6% // TRUMP 32.5%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 67.8% // ROMNEY 31.3%

2017 SENATE: *SCUTARI 67.3% // BONILLA 32.7%
2019 ASSEM: *CARTER 40.4%, *KENNEDY 39.1% // QUATTROCCHI 20.5%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 49.5%, REPUBLICAN 15.9%, UNAFFILIATED 33.2%

POPULATION: 229,951 (-2,274)
RACE: 35.7% WHITE, 21.4% BLACK, 33.9% HISPANIC, 5.2% ASIAN
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ONCE HOME to the moderate sensibilities of former Congressman Leonard Lance (R-Clinton), the 23rd district has since taken a sharp right turn, and now elects among the most staunchly conservative legislative delegations in the state.

State Sen. Michael Doherty (R-Oxford), a former assemblyman who rose to the Senate in 2009 after beating his Assembly counterpart Marcia Karrow (R-Raritan) in the primary, is among the relatively few New Jersey Republicans who have gone full Trump. The senator was the first New Jersey legislator to endorse Donald Trump in 2016.

At his side are Assemblyman John DiMaio (R-Hackettstown), serving since 2009, and Assemblyman Erik Peterson (R-Franklin), Doherty’s successor in the Assembly and a potential candidate against Rep. Tom Malinowski (D-Ringoes) in 2022.

Doherty and Peterson are a conservative’s conservatives, the type of Republican who probably would have backed Ronald Reagan against Gerald Ford. As long as Hunterdon and Warren remain together, the 23rd will be safe Republican.

Democrats have placeholder candidates. Doherty faces 2019 Democratic Assembly nominee Denise King in November, while DiMaio and Peterson will go up against Tewksbury Township Parks Committee Chair Hope Kaufman and recent Rutgers graduate Nick LaBelle.

23RD DISTRICT
INCUMBENTS MICHAEL DOHERTY, JOHN DIMAIO, ERIK PETERSON

NJ-23
Counts: Hunterdon, Somerset, Warren
Hunterdon: Alexandria, Bethlehem, Bloomsbury, Califon, Clinton, Clinton Township, Franklin, Frenchtown, Glen Gardner, Hampton, High Bridge, Holland, Kingwood, Lebanon Borough, Lebanon Township, Milford, Tewksbury, Union
Somerset: Bedminster, Bound Brook, Bridgewater, Peapack & Gladstone, Raritan, South Bound Brook

SENATE RATING: SOLID R
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID R
2021 SENATE: *MICHAEL DOHERTY // DENISE KING
2021 ASSEM: *JOHN DIMAIO, *ERIK PETERSON // HOPE KAUFMAN, NICHOLAS LABELLE

2020 PRES: TRUMP 50.4% // BIDEN 47.8%
2017 GOV: GUADAGNO 59.8% // MURPHY 40.2%
2016 PRES: TRUMP 53.8% // CLINTON 41.8%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 55.1% // OBAMA 43.4%

2017 SENATE: *DOHERTY 59.1% // CHEN 40.9%
2019 ASSEM: *DIMAIO 30.2%, *PETERSON 30.1% // KING 20.0%, TROFIMOV 19.8%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 28.2%, REPUBLICAN 35.1%, UNAFFILIATED 35.5%

POPULATION: 222,231 (-9,994)
RACE: 70.0% WHITE, 4.3% BLACK, 13.3% HISPANIC, 8.6% ASIAN
FEW DISTRICTS across the state are more critical to congressional results than the 24th. Its Morris, Sussex, and Warren County municipalities are currently spread across the 5th, 7th, and 11th congressional districts – or, in other words, all three of North Jersey’s competitive congressional districts – and could be decisive in all three in a close race.

But for all its congressional influence, the district hosts largely sleepy legislative contests, where victories for Republicans are all but preordained.

Steve Oroho (R-Franklin), a former Sussex County freeholder serving in the Senate since 2008, is one of several senators running to be the next Senate Minority Leader. He’ll first have to win re-election against Democrat Frederick Cook, which likely won’t be a problem; Sussex hasn’t voted for a Senate Democrat since Milton Woolfenden won in 1963.

On the Assembly side, Assemblyman Parker Space (R-Wantage) has drawn headlines for having the Confederate flag tattooed on his arm (he was born and raised in Wantage Township) and for calling his 2017 Democratic opponent a “bitch” – but it hasn’t stopped him from getting the most votes in every Assembly race since 2015. He’s wildly popular among the people who matter most to him – his constituents.

Space is joined by Assemblyman Hal Wirths (R-Wantage), a comparatively more low-key legislator who was Labor Commissioner under Gov. Chris Christie for seven years before being elected to the Assembly in 2017. Both Wirths and Oroho are also their respective chambers’ Republican budget officers.

The Democrats running for Assembly this year are Georjanna Cook, who shares an address with Senate nominee Frederick Cook, and ironworker Scott Fadden.

Come 2022, and depending on how congressional redistricting shakes out, municipalities like Mount Olive, Sparta, and Vernon might once again be critical. For now, they’ll have to be content with easily re-electing their Republican legislators.

COUNTIES: Morris, Sussex, Warren
Morris: Mount Olive
Sussex: Andover Borough, Andover Township, Branchville, Byram, Frankford, Franklin, Fredon, Green, Hamburg, Hampton, Hardyston, Hopatcong, Lafayette, Montague, Newton, Ogdensburg, Sandyston, Sparta, Stanhope, Stillwater, Sussex, Vernon, Walpack, Wantage

SENATE RATING: SOLID R
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID R
2021 SENATE: *STEVEN OROHO // FREDERICK COOK
2021 ASSEM: *PARKER SPACE, *HAL WIRTHS // GEORGIANNA COOK, SCOTT FADDEN

2020 PRES: TRUMP 57.7% // BIDEN 40.3%
2017 GOV: GUADAGNO 62.3% // MURPHY 37.7%
2016 PRES: TRUMP 61.9% // CLINTON 33.8%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 59.5% // OBAMA 38.8%

2017 SENATE: *OROHO 61.0% // HAMILTON 39.0%
2019 ASSEM: *SPACE 34.6%, *WIRTHS 33.1% // LYKINS 17.0%, SMITH 15.4%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 23.5%, REPUBLICAN 41.0%, UNAFFILIATED 34.1%

POPULATION: 210,381 (-21,844)
RACE: 80.0% WHITE, 2.6% BLACK, 10.2% HISPANIC, 3.1% ASIAN
STATE SEN. Anthony M. Bucco (R-Boonton) of the 25th district has an unusual mandate: when he ran and won in a 2020 special election, he received more votes – 67,142 – than any New Jersey legislative candidate since the state switched to single-member districts. Assemblywoman Aura Dunn (R-Mendham), running simultaneously with Bucco, is in second place at 64,469.

This distinction is not due to any ludicrous vote-getting powers on Bucco’s or Dunn’s part, though their ability to win even as Joe Biden carried the district by nine points is undeniably impressive. Rather, it was because the 2020 presidential election was the highest turnout American election in a century – and Bucco and Dunn came along for the ride.

The special elections capped off a strange year in the 25th district. Bucco’s father, State Sen. Anthony R. Bucco, died of a heart attack in September 2019, and the younger Bucco won a special convention to succeed him. But, confusingly, Bucco also kept running for the Assembly (where he’d served five terms) even though he had no intention of serving out the term if he won.

After winning, Bucco ascended to the Senate, and Dunn won the special convention to fill the rest of his term. Even more confusingly, Dunn then had to briefly leave office after Bucco’s term ended before being reappointed to a new term. Both then served for a year before winning their respective special elections in November 2020.

Also on the ticket is Assemblyman Brian Bergen (R-Denville) who, despite only just being elected in 2019 to succeed retiring Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll (R-Morris Township), is already preparing a run for Assembly Minority Leader.

This cycle, Democrats in the district are confronted with a dilemma similar to that in the 21st district. The 25th district is plenty competitive on paper, but in the time since Donald Trump was elected and sent the suburbs bolting leftward, they’ve had no fewer than five chances to flip it, and have come up short each time.

Bucco is now running in his fourth election in five years in a district where Democrats sunk a huge sum of money -- until now.

Their candidates – Morris Township Mayor Jeff Grayzel for Senate, Lauren Barnett and Patricia Veres for Assembly – have raised a credible amount of money. But they’re not getting the kind of investment and focus their predecessors have gotten from statewide and national Democrats.

For a party to turn a loss into a win, something fundamental in the race usually needs to change. Democrats simply don’t have that clinching point in their favor this year, and thus will most likely be locked out of the 25th district once again.

NJ-25

Counties: Morris, Somerset


Somerset: Bernardsville

SENATE RATING: LIKELY R
ASSEMBLY RATING: LIKELY R
2021 SENATE: *ANTHONY M. BUCCO // JEFFREY GRAYZEL
2021 ASSEM: *BRIAN BERGEN, *AURA DUNN // LAUREN BARNETT, PATRICIA VERES

2020 PRES: BIDEN 53.9% // TRUMP 44.6%
2017 GOV: GUADAGNO 53.2% // MURPHY 46.8%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 48.2% // TRUMP 48.0%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 53.7% // OBAMA 45.3%
2020 SENATE: *M. BUCCO 54.0% // MEHTA 46.0%
2017 SENATE: *R. BUCCO 52.2% // BHIMANI 47.8%
2020 ASSEM: *DUNN 52.5% // DRAEGER 47.5%
2019 ASSEM: *M. BUCCO 27.0%, BERGEN 25.7% // BHIMANI 24.0%, DRAEGER 23.3%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 31.2%, REPUBLICAN 32.9%, UNAFFILIATED 34.8%
POPULATION: 221,043 (-11,182)
RACE: 65.3% WHITE, 3.4% BLACK, 21.3% HISPANIC, 6.4% ASIAN

M. BUCCO: STATE SENATOR, 2019-, STATE ASSEMBLYMAN, 2010-19, STATE ASSEMBLY MINORITY WHIP, 2016-17, ATTORNEY, MURPHY AND MCKEON
BARNETT: MOUNTAIN LAKES BOROUGH COUNCILWOMAN, 2017-, CONSULTANT, IBM GLOBAL SERVICES, MOUNTAIN LAKES HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBER
VERES: WHARTON COUNCILWOMAN, 2017-20, PARTNER, EINHORN BARBARITO
Democrats pull off the upset of the cycle, the 26th district is set to take a right turn in 2021, after Assemblywoman BettyLou DeCroce (R-Parsippany) lost her primary to a more conservative Christian Barranco, an electrician and former Pompton Lakes councilman.

DeCroce won an Assembly seat in 2012 after her husband, Minority Leader Alex DeCroce, died after 23 years in the Assembly. This March, she narrowly lost the Morris County GOP line to Barranco in what amounted to a major upset.

DeCroce kept on campaigning anyway but ultimately fell just short and lost to Barranco by around 550 votes. Webber teamed up with Barranco and sent out mailers during the primary casting DeCroce as an anti-cop radical, and was the top vote-getter. Morris County Commissioner Tom Mastrangelo brought up the rear in fourth.

State Senator Joe Pennacchio is currently Senate Republican Whip and one of several Republicans aiming to become Senate Minority Leader next year. His opponent, environmental activist Christine Clarke, is running a credible and active campaign, albeit potentially all inside a bubble. Her running mates are businesswoman Melissa Brown Blaeuer and teacher and NJEA consultant Pamela Fadden.

But Democrats have struggled to win even in North Jersey districts that voted for Joe Biden and Phil Murphy; the 26th district voted for neither, and hasn’t elected a Democrat to the legislature since 1973. For all the tangled webs woven during the primary, Pennacchio, Webber, and Barranco are all prohibitive favorites in November.

**26TH DISTRICT**

**INCUMBENTS** Joe Pennacchio, Jay Webber, BettyLou Decroce

**NJ-26**

**Counties:** Essex, Morris, Passaic

**Essex:** Fairfield, North Caldwell, Verona, West Caldwell

**Morris:** Butler, Jefferson, Kinnelon, Lincoln Park, Montville, Morris Plains, Parsippany-Troy Hills, Rockaway Township

**Passaic:** West Milford

**SENATE RATING:** SOLID R

**ASSEMBLY RATING:** SOLID R
2021 SENATE: *JOE PENNACCHIO // CHRISTINE CLARKE
2021 ASSEM: CHRISTIAN BARRANCO, *JAY WEBBER // MELISSA BROWN BLAEUER, PAMELA FADDEN

2020 PRES: TRUMP 50.4% // BIDEN 48.2%
2017 GOV: GUADAGNO 53.6% // MURPHY 46.4%
2016 PRES: TRUMP 53.3% // CLINTON 43.3%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 54.8% // OBAMA 44.0%

2017 SENATE: *PENNACCHIO 56.5% // ISIBOR 43.5%
2019 ASSEM: *DECROCE 28.4%, *WEBBER 28.1% // CLARKE 21.8%, FORTGANG 21.7%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 27.9%, REPUBLICAN 34.7%, UNAFFILIATED 36.4%

POPULATION: 224,584 (-7,641)
RACE: 69.0% WHITE, 2.2% BLACK, 10.3% HISPANIC, 15.0% ASIAN
ONE DAY, State Sen. and former Gov. Richard Codey (D-Roseland) will stop running for office. After all, he’s the longest-serving legislator in New Jersey history, serving continuously for a staggering 48 years – longer than all but one member of the United States Congress.

That day is not coming this year, and it might not come for many years yet; after all, Codey is still a spry 74, making him a good decade younger than some of his legislative colleagues. (After Valerie Vainieri Huttle leaves the legislature in January, he’ll be the legislature’s only undertaker – and Codey will refuse to become his own customer.)

The one-time Senate President and governor will face former Essex County freeholder candidate Adam Kraemer, a contest he’s sure to win in a district that was drawn to be somewhat competitive but which has tilted heavily towards Democrats in recent years.

His running mates, Assemblywoman and Deputy Speaker Mila Jasey (D-South Orange) and Assemblyman John McKeon (D-West Orange), have served since 2007 and 2002, respectively – long tenures, but still not as long as Codey’s even when combined.

Neither is under much threat from Republicans Kevin Ryan and Jonathan Sym.

27TH DISTRICT
INCUMBENTS RICHARD CODEY, MILA JASEY, JOHN MCKEON

NJ-27

Counties: Essex, Morris

Essex: Caldwell, Essex Fells, Livingston, Maplewood, Millburn, Roseland, South Orange, West Orange

Morris: Chatham, East Hanover, Florham Park, Hanover, Harding, Madison

SENATE RATING: SOLID D
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID D
2021 SENATE: *RICHARD CODEY // ADAM KRAEMER
2021 ASSEM: *MILA JASEY, *JOHN MCKEON // KEVIN RYAN, JONATHAN SYM

2020 PRES: BIDEN 66.8% // TRUMP 32.1%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 64.2% // GUADAGNO 35.8%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 62.8% // TRUMP 34.4%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 57.0% // ROMNEY 42.2%

2017 SENATE: *CODEY 69.7% // CAPOZZOLI 30.3%
2019 ASSEM: *MCKEON 33.0%, *JASEY 32.0% // DAILEY 17.6%, TUCCI 17.4%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 43.8%, REPUBLICAN 20.5%, UNAFFILIATED 35.2%

POPULATION: 233,779 (+1,554)
RACE: 59.9% WHITE, 12.5% BLACK, 10.0% HISPANIC, 13.0% ASIAN
NJ GLOBE VOTERS GUIDE
2021

28TH DISTRICT
INCUMBENTS RONALD RICE, CLEOPATRA TUCKER, RALPH CAPUTO

No district can claim a delegation as old as the 28th, which covers parts of Newark and a smattering of municipalities immediately to its west. The youngest legislator the 28th district elects is State Sen. Ronald Rice (D-Newark), who will turn 76 this December.

But with age comes experience, as Assemblyman Ralph Caputo (D-Nutley) can attest to best. Caputo was first elected to the Assembly as a Republican all the way back in 1967, before the modern 40-district system was even implemented. After two terms, Caputo lost the support of the Essex GOP, and was subsequently out of elected office for 30 years.

In 2007, Caputo – by then an Essex County freeholder – launched his legislative comeback alongside Cleopatra Tucker (D-Newark), the widow of late Assemblyman Donald Kofi Tucker (D-Newark). With the support of the Essex Democratic Party, Caputo and Tucker defeated incumbent Assemblymembers Craig Stanley (D-Irvington) and Odaline Truitt (D-Newark), and have served together in Trenton since then.

Rice, meanwhile, is among the longest-serving legislators in the state, holding his Senate seat since 1986.

All three face Republicans this year – Frank Contella for the Senate, Anthony D’Angelo and Monique Headen for the Assembly – but the 28th district gave Joe Biden 79% of the vote, his best district in the state. Barring the unexpected, New Jersey’s oldest legislative delegation will get the opportunity to grow two years older.

NJ-28

Counties: Essex

Essex: Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, Irvington, Newark (pt.), Nutley

SENATE RATING: SOLID D
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID D
2021 SENATE: *RONALD RICE // FRANK CONTELLA
2021 ASSEM: *RALPH CAPUTO, *CLEOPATRA TUCKER // ANTHONY D’ANGELO, MONIQUE HEADEN

2020 PRES: BIDEN 79.0% // TRUMP 20.1%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 87.5% // GUADAGNO 12.5%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 80.1% // TRUMP 17.9%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 82.9% // ROMNEY 16.5%

2017 SENATE: *RICE 96.1% // KNIGHT-NAPPER 3.9%
2019 ASSEM: *CAPUTO 41.4%, *TUCKER 40.8% // BEMBRY-FREEMAN 8.4%, PIRES 7.7% // ROSS 1.6%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 53.3%, REPUBLICAN 8.4%, UNAFFILIATED 37.1%

POPULATION: 252,742 (+20,517)
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TWELVE DISTRICTS in New Jersey are currently represented by all-male legislative delegations, and another 19 elect two men and one woman. Only one – the 29th – elects three female legislators.

One of those legislators, State Sen. Teresa Ruiz (D-Newark), is soon to be the most powerful woman in the legislature; she’s slotted to take retiring State Sen. Loretta Weinberg’s (D-Teaneck) position as Senate Majority Leader, Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-West Deptford)’s second-in-command. Ruiz, elected in 2007 as the state’s first Latina senator, is currently Senate President Pro Tempore.

As the chair of the Assembly Budget Committee, Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin (D-Newark) is herself a force to be reckoned with after being elected in 2013. The newest member of the delegation is Assemblywoman Shanique Speight (D-Newark), who succeeded interim Assemblywoman Blonnie Watson (D-Newark) in 2017.

Republicans only make up 7% of the 29th district’s voters, the lowest of any district in the state, and the party was only able to field one candidate for the three seats: Debra Salters, who’s running for the Assembly against Pintor Marin and Speight.

Home to U.S. Sen. Cory Booker (D-Newark) and the soon-to-be Senate Majority Leader, the 29th district may be among the best-connected in the state.

29TH DISTRICT
INCUMBENTS TERESA RUIZ, ELIANA PINTOR MARIN, SHANIQUE SPEIGHT

NJ-29
Counties: Essex
Essex: Belleville, Newark (pt.)

SENATE RATING: SOLID D
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID D
2021 SENATE: *TERESA RUIZ
2021 ASSEM: *ELIANA PINTOR MARIN, *SHANIQUE SPEIGHT // DEBRA SALTERS

2020 PRES: BIDEN 78.9% // TRUMP 20.4%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 91.4% // GUADAGNO 8.6%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 83.6% // TRUMP 14.6%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 87.9% // ROMNEY 11.6%

2017 SENATE: *RUIZ 87.3% // LOPEZ 10.8% // OLIVERA 1.9%
2019 ASSEM: *PINTOR MARIN 40.9%, *SPEIGHT 39.4% // ANELLO 7.7%, VERAS 7.0% // JOHNSON 2.8%, VELAZQUEZ 2.4%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 52.1%, REPUBLICAN 7.0%, UNAFFILIATED 39.6%

POPULATION: 249,255 (+17,030)
Consistently the state’s most Republican district in statewide elections, and represented by Republicans for 30 straight years, the drama in the 30th district won’t come from the 2021 election.

Longtime legislators State Sen. Robert Singer (R-Lakewood) and Assemblyman Sean Kean (R-Wall), alongside relative newbie Assemblyman Ned Thomson (R-Wall), are on track to rack up huge margins against their Democratic opponents regardless of what might happen elsewhere in the state.

Instead, the big question in the 30th district is how it will look after redistricting. Thanks to explosive population growth in Lakewood, the district has a population of 268,949 as of 2020 – a full 37,000 people larger than the ideal district size.

New Jersey’s redistricting rules, which only allow municipalities to be split if they are larger than a district on their own, create limited options for how the 30th district could be drawn for future cycles.

Many of those options might not include Wall, thus shutting both Kean and Thomson out of their own district, or might double-bunk legislators from neighboring municipalities into a Lakewood-based district, setting up potentially intense primary battles in 2023.

But for now, these are considerations for the 11 members of the legislative redistricting commission, not for voters. No matter what happens to the 30th district down the road, Singer, Kean, and Thomson can at least consider themselves safe for one more term.
**2021 SENATE:** *ROBERT SINGER // DAN STINGER
2021 ASSEM: *SEAN KEAN, *EDWARD THOMSON // STEPHEN DOBBINS, MATTHEW FILOSA

**2020 PRES:** TRUMP 64.5% // BIDEN 34.4%
2017 GOV: GUADAGNO 59.7% // MURPHY 40.3%
2016 PRES: TRUMP 63.8% // CLINTON 33.2%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 62.5% // OBAMA 36.5%

**2017 SENATE:** *SINGER 60.2% // CORES 39.8%
2019 ASSEM: *KEAN 36.3%, *THOMSON 33.8% // FARKAS 14.4%, CELIK 13.8% // SCHROEDER 1.7%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 20.7%, REPUBLICAN 37.7%, UNAFFILIATED 40.7%

**POPULATION:** 269,949 (+37,724)
**RACE:** 82.4% WHITE, 2.3% BLACK, 10.6% HISPANIC, 1.6% ASIAN
THE RACE FOR State Assembly in the 31st district was settled at some moment in February when Bayonne Mayor Jimmy Davis told party leaders that he wanted to dump Assembly Majority Whip Nicholas Chiaravalloti (D-Bayonne) and replace him with someone else.

Chiaravalloti, once a top political ally of Davis, has inexplicably fallen out of the mayor’s favor and Hudson Democrats backed up Davis’ unwritten prerogative to name Bayonne’s representative in the legislature. Just like that, Chiaravalloti became a lame duck.

The new assemblyman – the part of Hudson that is the 31st has not sent a Republican to the legislature since Warren Harding headed the ticket 101 years ago – is going to be William B. Sampson IV, a 33-year-old crane operator at the Port of Newark and a member of the International Longshoremen’s Association.

Sampson had never voted in a Democratic primary and has a mother who answers his cell phone, so the expectations bar has been set low for his fledgling career in the legislature.

State Sen. Sandra Cunningham (D-Jersey City), meanwhile, may be at the pinnacle of her political career, and is a leading contender to become Senate Majority Leader next year. Cunningham won her seat in 2007, three years after her husband, Glenn, died while serving in the Senate and as mayor of Jersey City; she’s now a top ally of Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-West Deptford).

Still, her political future could hinge upon whether Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop, widely expected to win a third term this year, decides he too wants to invoke the unwritten prerogative and pick a new senator in 2023, after a new legislative map is drawn.

The third wheel in the delegation is Assemblywoman Angela McKnight (D-Jersey City), a three-term lawmaker who runs a non-profit senior citizen advocacy group. She chairs the Assembly Homeland Security and State Preparedness Committee and is a devoted backer of legislation that would require New Jersey students to demonstrate proficiency in their cursive writing skills.

Democrats have the 31st district locked up, but that doesn’t stop Hudson County Republicans from nominating candidates every two years. Their Senate candidate, Neil Schulman, is an old hand; he’s a former Jersey City GOP municipal chairman who’s run for office many times over the years. The biggest news of the cycle is that he endorsed Fulop for re-election.

Running on the GOP Assembly ticket are Rose Javier and Brandon Vita.

Worth watching, if you feel you need to watch something: the drop-off between Sampson and the rest of the ticket in Bayonne might show the strength of the Chiaravalloti-or-bust wing of the local Democratic Party in advance of Davis’ expected re-election campaign next May.
2021 SENATE: *SANDRA CUNNINGHAM // NEAL SCHULMAN
2021 ASSEM: *ANGELA MCKNIGHT, WILLIAM SAMPSON // ROSE JAVIER, BRANDON VILA

2020 PRES: BIDEN 75.4% // TRUMP 23.6%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 83.5% // GUADAGNO 16.5%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 76.7% // TRUMP 20.8%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 81.0% // ROMNEY 18.2%

2017 SENATE: *CUNNINGHAM 83.9% // MENDOZA 16.1%
2019 ASSEM: *MCKNIGHT 43.3%, *CHIARAVALLOTI 39.3% // MUSHNICK 8.8%, PALANGE 8.6%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 54.7%, REPUBLICAN 9.4%, UNAFFILIATED 34.1%

POPULATION: 260,634 (+28,409)
STATE Sen. Nicholas Sacco (D-North Bergen) has been mayor of North Bergen for 30 years and the state senator from the 32nd district for the last 28 years, making him the longest-serving senator in Hudson County history and one of the most consequential local political leaders in a generation. This year, he has a lock on a ninth term in the Senate.

Sacco is also the only sitting member of the State Senate to have ousted an incumbent in a primary election. He took out Thomas Cowan, a labor leader and sixteen-year legislator, by a 2-1 margin in 1993 after Cowan didn’t return Sacco’s phone call.

In Hudson County, Sacco is at the pinnacle of his local power. He played a key role in stopping Democrats from dumping County Executive Tom DeGise, and in the election of DeGise’s daughter, Amy, as county chair. His candidate for mayor of next-door West New York unseated a two-term incumbent in 2018, and Sacco clobbered self-funder Larry Wainstein with 69% of the vote in the 2019 North Bergen mayoral race.

Earlier this year, Sacco publicly feuded with Gov. Phil Murphy over mandatory minimum sentencing; for a time, it looked as though he was preparing to become the governor’s Mohel. But two appear to have patched things up – Murphy’s vote totals in North Bergen will evince how much – and Sacco has forged a solid relationship with Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop. Sacco and the other Hudson powerhouse, Union City Mayor/State Sen. Brian P. Stack, are also getting along.

Equally safe in the 32nd district are two Democratic Assembly incumbents, Angelica Jimenez (D-West New York) and Pedro Mejia (D-Secaucus). Republicans won the 32nd district State Assembly seats on the coattails of Gov. Thomas Kean’s landslide re-election in 1985, but Democrats won them back two years later.

Jimenez, a deputy speaker, is seeking her sixth term. If her political survival skills remain sharp, she could pass the legendary Christopher Jackman’s record sixteen years as an assemblyman from West New York (1968 to 1984).

Mejia won a special election convention in April 2018 after Vincent Prieto lost re-election as Assembly Speaker and then resigned from the legislature to become the president and CEO of the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority.

Like the Bayonne seat in the adjacent 31st district, local tradition dictates that one of the 32nd district seats be chosen by the mayor of Secaucus, Michael Gonnelli. Gonnelli was told he could pick anybody he wanted – as long as he picked a Hispanic – so he picked Mejia, an affable local businessman who became the first Dominican to serve in the New Jersey Legislature. He emerged as a strong campaigner when Sacco was running for re-election two years ago.

Republicans Juan Barbadillo, who is running for Senate, and Assembly candidates Tamara Claudio and Marisela Rodriguez are fighting the good fight in a safe Democratic district.
2021 SENATE: *NICHOLAS SACCO // JUAN BARBADILLO
2021 ASSEM: *ANGELICA JIMENEZ, *PEDRO MEJIA // TAMARA CLAUDIO, MARISELA RODRIGUEZ

2020 PRES: BIDEN 65.2% // TRUMP 33.9%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 78.1% // GUADAGNO 21.9%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 69.2% // TRUMP 28.1%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 73.9% // ROMNEY 25.2%

2017 SENATE: *SACCO 80.2% // CASTELLI 19.8%
2019 ASSEM: *JIMENEZ 40.5%, *MEJIA 39.0% // CARLETTA 10.3%, CURRELI 10.2%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 54.6%, REPUBLICAN 12.2%, UNAFFILIATED 31.7%

POPULATION: 243,875 (+11,650)
RACE: 24.0% WHITE, 2.8% BLACK, 57.2% HISPANIC, 12.0% ASIAN
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T HIS PAST winter, a video of the mayor of Union City went viral on the internet. It showed the mayor, Brian P. Stack, standing in the snow and surrounded by flashing lights from first responder vehicles, giving a report of a Friday evening apartment building fire.

Stack said a space heater caused the fire and then, after offering a lesson in space heater safety, gave out his cell phone number and said anyone who needed a smoke alarm – or a carbon monoxide detector – should call him and he’ll get it installed. “You can never be too careful dealing with fires,” he said.

There may be no retail politician in America with better constituent service skills and exuding greater authenticity than Stack, the mayor of Union City for the last 21 years. He gives everyone in the state’s 18th-largest city (pop. 68,589) his cell number – and everyone gets a call back.

In addition to being mayor, Stack was an assemblyman from Hudson County’s 33rd district four years before winning a State Senate seat in 2007. The first race was the only serious contest for Stack as a legislative candidate. Running off the line, he defeated Assemblyman Sal Vega, the mayor of West New York, with 77% of the vote.

Stack isn’t the 33rd district’s only prominent representative. 37-year-old Assemblyman Raj Mukherji (D-Jersey City) is chair of the Assembly Judiciary Committee and considered one of the rising stars of New Jersey politics.

Mukherji, like Stack, started out in politics as a teenager and founded multiple businesses while still in high school. After 9/11, as a 17-year-old, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and worked in military intelligence. Then, upon graduating from law school, he became chairman of the Jersey City Housing Authority and later served as deputy mayor of Jersey City before being elected to the Assembly in 2013.

Next time Hudson County gets the Assembly Speaker post, look for it to be Mukherji. He could also become the first Speaker of Asian descent in New Jersey, which has watched its Asian American population grow exponentially over the last two decades.

Also representing the district in the Assembly is Annette Chaparro (D-Hoboken), who was picked by former Mayor Dawn Zimmer. Unlike the mayors of Bayonne and Secaucus, Hoboken Mayor Ravi Bhalla has been unable to get his own Assembly candidate ratified by the Hudson County Democrats.

Like the next-door 32nd district, Republicans won two Assembly seats in the 1985 Tom Kean landslide. The seats reverted back to the Democrats when Bob Menendez, then the young Union City mayor, and Bernard Kenney (D-Hoboken) flipped the two seats in 1987. Kenney later served as Senate Majority Leader. It was Kenney’s retirement that set the stage for Stack to go to the Senate and for Steve Sweeney to become majority leader, his springboard to the Senate Presidency two years later.

There is no better place to judge the potential of early voting in New Jersey than in Union City. Stack is a GOTV fiend, and with a polling location in his city that’s open nights and weekends during a 9-day period, there are few who would be surprised if Stack hovered around the 100% voter turnout myth.

The Republican candidate against Stack is Agha Khan, a Jersey City Republican who is making his fifth bid for public office since 2007. Jacob Curtis and Marcos Marte are running against Mukherji and Chaparro.

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33RD DISTRICT

INCUMBENTS BRIAN STACK, ANNETTE CHAPARRO, RAJ MUKHERJI

NJ-33

Counties: Hudson

Hudson: Hoboken, Jersey City (pt.), Union, Weehawken
BRIAN STACK
PHOTO BY Kevin Sanders for the New Jersey Globe

ANNETTE CHAPARRO AND RAJ MUKHERJI
PHOTO BY Kevin Sanders for the New Jersey Globe

2021 SENATE: *BRIAN STACK // AGHA KHAN
2021 ASSEM: *ANNETTE CHAPARRO, *RAJ MUKHERJI // JACOB CURTIS, MARCOS MARTE

2020 PRES: BIDEN 75.8% // TRUMP 22.9%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 85.9% // GUADAGNO 14.1%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 77.1% // TRUMP 19.4%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 76.8% // ROMNEY 21.9%

2017 SENATE: *STACK 88.2% // HAMBURGER 11.8%
2019 ASSEM: *MUKHERJI 42.4%, *CHAPARRO 42.3% // LUCYK 8.0%, ROHENA 7.3%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 55.7%, REPUBLICAN 11.0%, UNAFFILIATED 32.1%

POPULATION: 249,706 (+17,481)

SENATE RATING: SOLID D
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID D
BACK IN the 1980s and 1990s, the 34th legislative district was competitive. It included Clifton and Bloomfield, then winnable for the GOP, and Republican strongholds of Wayne and Totowa. But legislative redistricting in 2001 substantially altered the 34th by combining Clifton with Montclair and East Orange, and it’s now one of the state’s bluest districts.

Nia Gill was a four-tern assemblywoman from Montclair when she was moved from the 27th to the 34th in 2001. In the Democratic primary, Gill defeated now-lieutenant governor Sheila Oliver, then a former Essex County freeholder who had come within 51 votes of becoming mayor of East Orange. She ousted freshman Republican State Sen. Norman Robertson (R-Clifton) in the general election by an almost 2-1 margin.

In the State Assembly, the 34th is represented by a Democratic icon and by one of the Democratic Party’s rising stars: Assemblyman Thomas P. Giblin (D-Montclair) and Assemblywoman Britnee Timberlake (D-East Orange).

The son of John J. Giblin, who served as an Essex County freeholder in the 1950s and state senator in the 1960s, Giblin followed his father into the family business: the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 68. Way back in 1973, when the younger Giblin was only 26, he came within 1,079 votes of winning an open State Assembly seat in a district that re-elected incumbent Assembly Speaker (and future governor) Thomas H. Kean.

Giblin is now completing his eighth term in the State Assembly, the latest stop in a political career that included non-consecutive stints on the Essex County Board of Freeholders in the 1970s and 1980s and as Essex County Surrogate in the 1990s. He served as Essex County Democratic Chairman, held a stint as New Jersey Democratic State Chairman, twice nearly scored the Democratic nomination for Essex County Executive, and is likely to wind up in the New Jersey Hall of Fame someday.

Timberlake, meanwhile, won a 2018 special election convention after Oliver left the legislature to take office as lieutenant governor. The 35-year-old Timberlake had already served four years as a freeholder, and has quickly developed a reputation as a substantive lawmaker and progressive policy maker in the legislature.

As a protégé of both Giblin and LeRoy Jones, Jr., the Democratic State Chairman and the Essex County Democratic Chairman, Timberlake is widely viewed as a potential candidate for State Senate or for statewide office down the line.

It’s not clear how long the 73-year-old Gill will remain in the Senate; there has been speculation of a primary challenge for years, and it’s uncertain where the deep-benched Montclair will wind up after the next round of legislative redistricting.

But in 2021, the 34th is solidly Democratic. Gill faces political newcomer Scott Pollock, also of Montclair; Giblin and Timberlake’s Republican opponents are Tafari Anderson and Irene DeVita, who won just 17% against Timberlake in 2018 and lost again in 2019.

Also on the ballot as an independent is Rev. Clenard H. Childress, Jr., the pastor of the New Calvary Baptist Church in Montclair who is making his ninth bid for the State Assembly. He has lost two Democratic primaries, ran once as a Republican, and six times as an independent.
SENATE RATING: SOLID D
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID D
The Passaic County-based 35th district is a minority-majority district centered around Paterson, New Jersey's third-largest city.

Until 2011, Paterson was represented in the Senate by a white man, John Girgenti, a right-of-center Democrat whose 34-year career in the legislature ended when his hometown was moved to a Bergen-based seat in the last round of redistricting.

Since then, the senator has been Nellie Pou (D-North Haledon), a former assemblywoman – she won a 1997 special election convention after Bill Pascrell, Jr. was elected to Congress – and the former Paterson city business administrator. Pou is one of three Latinas serving in the New Jersey Senate, the other two being State Sen. Nilsa Cruz-Perez (D-Barrington) and State Sen. Teresa Ruiz (D-Newark).

As the chair of the Senate Commerce Committee and with a seat on the Judiciary Committee, Pou has frequently emerged as a pivotal vote in the upper house. She’s got a good working relationship with Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-West Deptford), but she’s not part of Sweeney’s leadership math equation.

After Pou moved up to the Senate in 2011 and Assemblywoman Elease Evans retired after two terms, the two 35th district Assembly seats were filled by Shavonda Sumter and Benjie Wimberly, both Democrats from Paterson. Since then, they have survived the rough-and-tumble local politics that have seen five mayors in the last decade.

Both are mentioned for higher office someday – Pascrell is 84 but shows no sign of leaving anytime soon – and it’s possible there is room for both.

In a legislature whose Democratic majority frequently sparred with Gov. Phil Murphy, especially during the first two years of his term, Sumter may be one of the governor’s closest allies and is wildly popular among Murphy staffers. A 47-year-old health care administrator, Sumter briefly mulled a run for governor in 2017, was a finalist to become Murphy’s running mate, and could become a gubernatorial candidate in 2025.

She spent four years as the Majority Conference Leader, two as deputy speaker, and now chairs the Community Development and Affairs Committee.

Wimberly is well-known in North Jersey as a high school football coach. He guided Paterson Catholic to seven state championships in fifteen years and stepped down in February after a nine-year stint as the Hackensack High School football coach. He has been more likely than Sumter to side with Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin.

Republicans haven’t won the 35th district State Senate seat since 1973 – a strange “all politics is local” election when the GOP lost fourteen Senate seats in the Watergate landslide, but Paterson bucked the tide and ousted a Democratic senator. The incumbent, Joseph Lazzara (the father of the Passaic County Commissioner Sandi Lazzara) lost by 93 votes to Republican Frank Davenport, the Passaic County sheriff.

On the Assembly side, Republicans haven’t won since 1993, when Frank Catania ousted an interim incumbent in a 1990 special election and then held the seat in 1991 and 1993.

Pou faces Republican Kenneth Pentigore, a former mayor of Haledon; Pentigore was Pou’s opponent in 2011 and won just 25% of the vote. Against Sumter and Wimberly, Republicans are running political newcomers Iman Majagah and Ramzy Yamisha.
2021 SENATE: *NELLIE POU // KENNETH PENGITORE
2021 ASSEM: *SHAVONDA SUMTER, *BENJIE WIMBERLY // IMAN MAJAGAH, RAMZY YAMISHA

2020 PRES: BIDEN 70.0% // TRUMP 29.1%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 78.7% // GUADAGNO 21.3%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 76.7% // TRUMP 21.4%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 82.2% // ROMNEY 17.3%

2017 SENATE: *POU 79.0% // SHOLAKH 21.0%
2019 ASSEM: *WIMBERLY 43.5%, *SUMTER 43.4% // MAMKEJ 13.1%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 48.5%, REPUBLICAN 11.6%, UNAFFILIATED 38.0%

POPULATION: 238,160 (+5,935)
RACE: 21.2% WHITE, 17.9% BLACK, 53.2% HISPANIC, 5.3% ASIAN

SENATE RATING: SOLID D
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID D
JUST
SHOWING UP
IS HALF THE
BATTLE
WOODY ALLEN

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New Jersey Education Association: 200,000 proud advocates for members, students, and great public schools.
While some people view the South Bergen portion of the 36th as blue collar swing-voters that are somehow gettable for Republicans, that’s not necessarily a data driven analysis. The fourteen South Bergen towns in the 36th gave Joe Biden a 7,400-vote plurality over Donald Trump last year – and that’s not including votes from the city of Passaic.

Twenty years ago, when State Sen. Paul Sarlo (D-Wood-Ridge) was first elected to the legislature, the 36th was competitive. Then a 33-year-old, first-term mayor of a tiny Bergen County municipality, Sarlo flipped an open Republican Assembly seat in a Democratic year by 1,417 votes against James Cassella, the Republican mayor of East Rutherford. Now he’s a shoo-in for a seventh term in the State Senate, and that’s not because the district is blue.

Good timing brought Sarlo to the dance. Republican Assemblyman John V. Kelly (R-Nutley) gave up his seat to run for the Senate – he nearly unseated Democratic State Sen. Garry Furnari (D-Nutley) – and Sarlo was initially in a split district with Assembly Majority Leader Paul DiGaetano (R-Nutley). DiGaetano had hoped to be Speaker, but after Democrats picked up nine seats in 2001, DiGaetano was relegated to minority leader instead.

Furnari left the Senate in 2003 to become a Superior Court Judge and Sarlo was picked as his replacement. In Gov. Jim McGreevey’s midterm election, Sarlo beat the charismatic Kelly by nine percentage points to hold on to his seat; he hasn’t fallen below 57% of the vote since.

After DiGaetano left the Assembly in 2005 to make an unrealistic run for governor – he received 5.5% statewide – Democrats easily captured the second Assembly seat. Gary Schaer (D-Passaic), a Passaic City Councilman since 1995 and still the city council president, won the seat by more than 9,000 votes and is now one of the senior lawmakers in the lower house.

Since then, Sarlo and Schaer have both fastidiously worked this district, building relationships with Republican local officials and GOP insiders, and have become powerful insiders in Trenton.

Sarlo briefly chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee before becoming the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee Chairman more than a decade ago. Schaer was the longtime Assembly Budget Committee Chairman until being on the losing side of the 2017 Speaker’s fight returned him to the back benches for a while. But by sheer force of his intelligence and skill, he’s relevance in Trenton is indisputable.

The third member of the District 36 team is Assemblyman Clinton Calabrese (Cliffside Park), the grandson of a Bergen County legend. A former professional basketball player, Gerald Calabrese served 50 years as mayor of Cliffside Park, as a Bergen County freeholder, and as Democratic county chairman.

The younger Calabrese, 35, went to the Assembly in a 2018 special election convention after Marlene Caride resigned to become Gov. Phil Murphy’s Commissioner of Banking and Insurance. He’s got close ties to Bergen County Democratic Chairman Paul Juliano and to his uncle, Cliffside Park Thomas Calabrese, and he’s seen as a potential successor to Sarlo someday, if redistricting and other circumstances permit.

Republicans started the cycle with a near-disaster. Chris Auriemma, an Iraq combat veteran and volunteer firefighter, had sought to take on Sarlo – his brother, Craig, and Ana Castillo were running for Assembly – but their nominating petitions didn’t have the requisite number of legal signatures needed to get on the ballot. They dropped out just before a judge was about to hear the challenge.

Instead, the pair of Auriemmas and Joseph Viso won the nomination as write-in candidates in the June GOP primary. But there’s no flicker of life in their candidacies, and the Democratic incumbents are likely to romp, again.
2021 SENATE: *PAUL SARLO // CHRIS AURIEMMA
2021 ASSEM: *CLINTON CALABRESE, *GARY SCHAER // CRAIG AURIEMMA, JOSEPH VISO

2020 PRES: BIDEN 55.9% // TRUMP 43.0%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 61.6% // GUADAGNO 38.4%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 56.7% // TRUMP 40.4%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 63.2% // ROMNEY 35.8%

2017 SENATE: *SARLO 65.8% // FERRARA 34.2%
2019 ASSEM: *SCHAER 30.8%, *CALABRESE 30.5% // LOWE 19.4%, ANDROWIS 19.3%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 40.8%, REPUBLICAN 18.2%, UNAFFILIATED 39.6%

POPULATION: 234,046 (+1,821)
RACE: 40.3% WHITE, 3.9% BLACK, 42.3% HISPANIC, 10.4% ASIAN

SENATE RATING: SOLID D
ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID D
THE RETIREMENT of Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg, perhaps one of the most consequential state legislators in New Jersey history and the liberal lion of the Senate, set off a vicious primary fight for a rare State Senate seat in a heavily Democratic district.

Immediately following Weinberg’s announcement that she wasn’t going to run again, the two longtime Assembly members from the Bergen County district quickly joined the race: Assemblyman Gordon Johnson (D-Englewood), the Assembly Speaker Pro-Tempore, and Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle (D-Englewood), a prolific progressive lawmaker.

Both candidates had nearly identical voting records after serving together in the lower house for sixteen years, but Vainieri Huttle tried to make the case that Johnson was just voting on bills she wrote. Johnson said he wanted to break a class ceiling as the first Black senator from Bergen County, while Vainieri Huttle extolled the virtues of keeping a woman in the Senate seat.

The campaign sometimes became tense, with some women believing it had been Weinberg who spent decades kicking doors down as part of her lifelong fight to create more opportunities for women in government and politics, and that Vainieri Huttle was simply walking through those doors.

After it became clear that Johnson, who had seemingly never missed a local Democratic picnic, had mathematically clinched the Bergen organization line by securing the endorsements of enough delegates, Vainieri Huttle announced that she would skip the convention and take the election directly to primary voters.

Johnson secured endorsements from Weinberg and Gov. Phil Murphy, while grassroots progressive groups came out for Vainieri Huttle. Johnson was never much of a fundraiser and Bergen County Democratic Chairman suddenly had to come through with a huge war chest in what became the first serious test of his chairmanship.

In a way, progressive leaders unable to count votes in a Bergen County primary may have inadvertently played a key role in making Johnson a solid member of Senate President Steve Sweeney’s leadership census. Faced with a real primary, Johnson and Bergen Democrats turned to Sweeney and South Jersey for financial help. Now there’s an IOU card hanging out there.

The results were lopsided. Johnson defeated Vainieri Huttle by a landslide 72%-28% margin, carrying all thirteen municipalities in the 37th district.

Johnson and Vainieri Huttle were replaced on the Democratic Assembly ticket by Tenafly Democratic Municipal Chair Shama Haider and former Englewood Cliffs Councilwoman Ellen Park. They ran with Johnson on the organization line and defeated Vainieri Huttle’s running mates, Teaneck Councilwoman Gervonn Romney-Rice and Tenafly Council President Lauren Dayton. Haider and Park also swept all thirteen municipalities, dealing losses to Romney-Rice and Dayton even in their hometowns.

Since New Jersey went to a 40-district map in 1973 Bergen County’s 37th district has never elected a Republican, even in the 1991 anti-Jim Florio tax revolt that elected GOP senators in the county’s four other districts. That trend won’t change this year.

For the Senate, Johnson faces Michael W. Koontz, who is making his first bid as a Republican after losing four races for Governor, Congress, State Senate and State Assembly as an independent between 1997 and 2001.

Notably, one of the GOP Assembly candidates is Edward Durfee, the Northern New Jersey Regional Director of the Oath Keepers, an anti-government militia group that prosecutors think was involved in the planning of the January 6 events. Durfee has acknowledged running security operations for the Oath Keepers in Washington that day but maintains that he never entered the U.S. Capitol building. The New Jersey Office of Homeland Security identified the Oath Keepers as a moderate domestic terrorism threat under Gov. Chris Christie in 2016.

His running mate is 82-year-old Perley Patrick, who attends Saturday morning Oath Keepers breakfast meetings but is not a member.

Haider would become the first Pakistani American and first Muslim to serve in the New Jersey Legislature – or one of the first, depending on how Sadaf Jaffer does in a race for an open Assembly seat in the 16th district. Park is positioned to become the first Korean American woman to serve in Trenton.

The lack of focus on Durfee and his running mates, by Democrats and by the media, is an indication of how the Democratic primary in the 37th district is tantamount to election.
2021 SENATE: GORDON JOHNSON // MICHAEL KOONTZ // GLENN COLEY
2021 ASSEM: SHAMA HAIDER, ELLEN PARK // EDWARD DURFEE, PERLEY PATRICK // NATACHA PANNELL

2020 PRES: BIDEN 68.6% // TRUMP 30.5%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 72.8% // GUADAGNO 27.2%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 69.9% // TRUMP 27.6%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 68.1% // ROMNEY 31.1%

2017 SENATE: *WEINBERG 75.4% // ROMERO 24.6%
2019 ASSEM: *JOHNSON 35.9%, *HUTTLE 35.7% // HENDRICKS 13.9%, TESSARO 13.7% // BELUSIC 0.9%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 49.7%, REPUBLICAN 14.4%, UNAFFILIATED 34.9%

POPULATION: 231,985 (-240)
RACE: 34.8% WHITE, 12.4% BLACK, 24.5% HISPANIC, 24.8% ASIAN

Senator Weinberg (Retiring)

Photo by Kevin Sanders for the New Jersey Globe

Gordon Johnson and Valerie Vainieri Huttle (Departing)
As recently as this summer, Republicans said their path to a majority in the New Jersey State Senate was paved through the 38th district – but that was just a tremendous display of pie-in-the-sky optimism.

Sure, the 38th has been competitive before. The Senate seat flipped between political parties six times between 1971 and 2001, until legislative redistricting dropped some GOP towns and replaced them with Fort Lee, a Democratic stronghold (which is now back in the 37th district).

Even in this decade, the 38th has seen some razor-thin races. With Gov. Chris Christie on the top of the 2013 ticket, Republicans came within 56 votes of wresting one Assembly seat from Democrats and 443 votes of taking the second seat.

But since then, the 38th has become even more Democratic. Joe Biden won the district with 56% last year, and Murphy with 57% in 2017. The district has 25,405 more registered Democrats than Republicans; when it was drawn in 2011, the registration edge was 12,206.

State Sen. Joseph Lagana (D-Paramus) has represented the 38th district since a 2018 special election to replace State Sen. Bob Gordon, who took a seat on the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities.

Lagana won that year with 60%, slightly better than Gordon’s 57% the previous year. Since taking his seat, the 42-year-old attorney has seen a meteoric rise in influence, both in Trenton and in North Jersey, and is widely viewed as part of the next generation of New Jersey political leaders serving in the legislature.

With Gordon resigning and Lagana outmaneuvering his fellow Assemblyman Tim Eustace (D-Maywood) for his Senate seat, the 38th district witnessed three different special elections in 2018. The two open Assembly seats were won by former Fair Lawn mayor Lisa Swain and Christopher Tully, who served as Bergenfield council president and as Rep. Josh Gottheimer’s district director.

Republicans no longer attract top-tier challengers in the 38th, and even if they did, the GOP doesn’t have the money to run their campaigns. Their candidate against Lagana is Richard Garcia, the president of the Newark Board of Education Employees Credit Union.

Against Swain and Tully, the Republicans are running former Lodi school board member Al Mastrofilipo, Jr, and Jerry Taylor, who served eight years on the Saddle Brook school board and ran for councilman in 2012.

This is a district that would attract notice in a wave election, but 2021 isn’t one of those years.

38TH DISTRICT

INCUMBENTS JOSEPH LAGANA, LISA SWAIN, CHRIS TULLY

NJ-38

Counties: Bergen, Passaic

Bergen: Bergenfield, Fair Lawn, Glen Rock, Hasbrouck Heights, Lodi, Maywood, New Milford, Oradell, Paramus, River Edge, Rochelle Park, Saddle Brook

Passaic: Hawthorne

SENATE RATING: SOLID D

ASSEMBLY RATING: SOLID D
2021 SENATE: *JOSEPH LAGANA // RICHARD GARCIA
2021 ASSEM: *LISA SWAIN, *CHRIS TULLY // ALFONSO MASTROFILIPO, JERRY TAYLOR

2020 PRES: BIDEN 56.1% // TRUMP 42.7%
2017 GOV: MURPHY 56.6% // GUADAGNO 43.4%
2016 PRES: CLINTON 53.2% // TRUMP 43.8%
2012 PRES: OBAMA 54.5% // ROMNEY 44.5%

2018 SENATE: LAGANA 60.1% // BERGER 39.9%
2017 SENATE: *GORDON 57.1% // LANGSCHULTZ 42.9%
2019 ASSEM: *SWAIN 27.7%, *TULLY 27.2% // DIPIAZZA 22.7%, KAZIMIR 22.4%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 37.4%, REPUBLICAN 22.2%, UNAFFILIATED 39.3%

POPULATION: 227,451 (-4,774)
RACE: 56.1% WHITE, 3.8% BLACK, 21.4% HISPANIC, 15.7% ASIAN
On the morning of February 20, 2021, Passaic County Republicans voted to award their organization line for state senator in the 39th district to Holly Schepisi (R-River Vale) by a vote of 17-3. The vote took place before they received word that the 12-term incumbent, 86-year-old Gerald Cardinale (R-Demarest), had died earlier that morning.

He had battled some health issues in recent years – weeks before his passing, he complained that his body had atrophied while spending nearly a year at home during Covid – but he was actively campaigning for a 13th term in the Senate against Schepisi, a five-term assemblywoman from River Vale who decided it was time to take her shot at a Senate seat.

Cardinale had served 41 years and one month in the legislature, all but two years of them in the Senate, making him the longest serving Republican legislator in state history. (He had set the record above 80 years earlier: in a 1979 Assembly race and a 1981 Senate race.

Instead of a June primary, Schepisi opted for a February 20, 2021 special election convention to fill the vacant Senate seat. For a couple of weeks, it was a rollercoaster. Assemblyman Bob Auth (R-Old Tappan), one of Cardinale’s closest friends, got in the Senate race and won the endorsement of the late senator’s widow, Carole.

But facing his personal grief and considerable pressure from Republican leaders who said they’d pull support for his lower house re-election if he continued the Senate race, Auth dropped out. Then he got back in again and almost pulled off an upset: Schepisi beat him by just eight votes.

Two weeks later, Republicans returned for a second special election convention, this time to fill Schepisi’s now-vacant Assembly seat. The new senator endorsed Dr. John Azzariti, a Saddle River councilman, while Auth ran the campaign of Upper Saddle River Councilwoman DeAnne DeFuccio. DeFuccio defeated Azzariti by a mere seven votes.

The primary election for a full term became unsurprisingly bizarre. The now-unopposed Schepisi shared the Bergen GOP line with Auth and DeFuccio, but endorsed Azzariti and former Saddle River GOP Municipal Chairman John Kurpis in their off-the-line Assembly bids. (They had the line in Passaic, which represented about 15% of the primary votes.) Auth and DeFuccio won the primary easily.

Now things have quieted down, and the three Republican lawmakers are focusing on a general election in a district that hasn’t sent a Democrat to Trenton since 1977. Indeed, the last two times a Democrat sought re-election, Cardinale beat them both times: in a 1979 Assembly race and a 1981 Senate race.

Still, from time to time, Democrats convince themselves that the 39th is winnable. It’s not a crazy prospect; Joe Biden won the district with 52% and Democrats have a slight voter registration edge. In 2017, Phil Murphy took 48% in the 39th. The all-suburban 39th is exactly the kind of district Jack Ciattarelli can’t afford to lose.

But after spending substantial sums to flip Assembly seats in 2017 and 2019, there is no indication that Democrats are fighting with similar intensity this year.

The party is running former Saddle River Board of Education President Ruth Dugan for Senate, with Demarest mayor Melinda Iannuzzi and Karlito Almeda, Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg’s deputy legislative director, running for Assembly. Almeda in particular seems to be on a strong trajectory for the future.

Dugan is married to James P. Dugan (D-Bayonne), who represented Hudson County in the State Senate from 1972 to 1978. Dugan served his first two years in the Senate with DeFuccio’s grandfather, State Sen. William F. Kelly (D-Jersey City), a 16-year senator and former Democratic gubernatorial candidate.

In one final twist, Democrats might have a Supreme Court seat riding on this election. Schepisi now has senatorial courtesy over Murphy’s nominee, Rachel Wainer Apter, who was nominated last March to the top court and still hasn’t received Schepisi’s sign off.

If Schepisi continues to exercise courtesy – helping a young, liberal justice get her seat could cause her Republican base problems when she’s up for re-election in two years – it could either torpedo Wainer Apter’s nomination or cause her to move out of Bergen County.

NJ-39

Counties: Bergen, Passaic


Passaic: Bloomingdale, Ringwood, Wanaque
2021 SENATE: *HOLLY SCHEPISI // RUTH DUGAN // JAMES TOSONE
2021 ASSEM: *ROBERT AUTH, *DEANNE DEFUCCIO // KARLITO ALMEDA, MELINDA IANNUZZI

2020 PRES: BIDEN 51.7% // TRUMP 47.1%
2017 GOV: GUADAGNO 51.8% // MURPHY 48.2%
2016 PRES: TRUMP 50.4% // CLINTON 46.3%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 54.2% // OBAMA 44.8%

2017 SENATE: *CARDINALE 52.8% // SCHWAGER 46.3% // TOSONE 0.9%
2019 ASSEM: *SCHEPISI 28.2%, *AUTH 26.5% // BIRKNER 22.9%, FALOTICO 22.4%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 30.1%, REPUBLICAN 29.2%, UNAFFILIATED 39.9%

POPULATION: 217,994 (-14,231)
RACE: 72.4% WHITE, 1.7% BLACK, 10.5% HISPANIC, 12.1% ASIAN

SENATE RATING: LIKELY R
ASSEMBLY RATING: LIKELY R
Here's to a successful 2021 to all!

Also, a small announcement… It’s time for a change… Parano & Associates has had a tremendous run… but it’s always good to reinvent yourself
Stay tuned in 2022 for a brand new company with the same bold vision!

Dave Parano
THE MEMBERS OF SEIU 32BJ ANNOUNCE THEIR ENDORSEMENTS FOR THE NOVEMBER 2021 ELECTIONS:

**GOVERNOR:**
Phil Murphy

**NEW JERSEY SENATE:**
Stephen Sweeney – LD 3
Fred H. Madden Jr. – LD 4
Nilsa Cruz Perez – LD 5
Troy Singleton – LD 7
Dawn Marie Addiego – LD 8
Vin Gopal – LD 11
Linda R. Greenstein – LD 14
Andrew Zwicker – LD 16
Bob Smith – LD 17
Patrick J. Diegnan Jr. – LD 18
Joseph F. Vitale – LD 19
Joseph P. Cryan – LD 20
Nicholas P. Scutari – LD 22
Christine Clarke – LD 26
Richard Codey – LD 27
M. Teresa Ruiz – LD 29
Sandra B. Cunningham – LD 31
Nicholas J. Sacco – LD 32
Brian P. Stack – LD 33
Nia H. Gill – LD 34
Nellie Pou – LD 35
Paul A. Sarlo – LD 36
Gordon M. Johnson – LD 37
Joseph A. Lagana – LD 38

**NEW JERSEY ASSEMBLY:**
John J. Buzichelli – LD 3
Adam J. Tialaferrro – LD 3
Gabriela M. Mosquera – LD 4
William F. Moen Jr. – LD 5
William W. Spearman – LD 5
Herb Conaway Jr. – LD 7
Carol Murphy – LD 7
Mark Natale – LD 8
Allison Eckel – LD 8
Joann Downey – LD 11
Eric Houghtaling – LD 11
Daniel R. Benson – LD 14
Wayne P. DeAngelo – LD 14
Verlina Reynolds-Jackson – LD 15
Anthony S. Verelli – LD 15
Roy Freiman – LD 16
Sadaf Jaffer – LD 16
Joe Danielsen – LD 17
Joseph V. Egan – LD 17
Robert J. Karabinchak – LD 18
Sterley Stanley – LD 18
Craig J. Coughlin – LD 19
Yvonne Lopez – LD 19
Annette Quijano – LD 20
Reverend Reginald Atkins – LD 20
Elizabeth A. Graner – LD 21
Anjali Mehrotra – LD 21
Linda Carter – LD 22
James J. Kennedy – LD 22
Melissa Brown Blaeuer – LD 26
Pamela Fadden – LD 26
Mila M. Jasey – LD 27
John F. McKeon – LD 27
Ralph F. Caputo – LD 28
Cleopatra G. Tucker – LD 28
Eliana Pintor Marin – LD 29
Shanique Speight – LD 29
Angela V. McKnight – LD 31
Angelica M. Jimenez – LD 32
Pedro Mejia – LD 32
Annette Chaparro – LD 33
Raj Mukherji – LD 33
Thomas P. Giblin – LD 34
Britnee N. Timberlake – LD 34
Shavonda E. Sumter – LD 35
Benjie E. Wimberly – LD 35
Gary S. Schaeer – LD 36
Shama Haider – LD 37
Ellen Park – LD 37
Lisa Swain – LD 38
P. Christopher Tuly – LD 38

**JERSEY CITY:**
Mayor: Steven Fulop
Council at Large: Amy Degise, Rolando Lavarro, Joyce Watterman
Jersey City Council – Ward A – Denise Ridley
Jersey City Council – Ward B – Mira Prinz-Arey
Jersey City Council – Ward C – Rich Bogiano
Jersey City Council – Ward D – Yousef Saleh
Jersey City Council – Ward E – James Solomon
Jersey City Council – Ward F – Jermain Robinson

**HOBOKEN:**
Mayor: Ravi S. Bhalla
Hoboken City Council: Jim Doyle, Emily Jabbour, Joe Quintero

**HILLSIDE:**
Mayor: Dhalia Vertreese
Hillside Council: Lisa Bonnano, Craig Epps, Robert Rios

**PARSIPPANY:**
Mayor: Michael Soriano
Parsippany Council: Cori Herbig, Judy Hernandez

**MORRISTOWN:**
Mayor: Timothy Dougherty
Morristown Council: Toshiba Foster, Nathan Umbriac, David Silva

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The Members of SEIU 32BJ announce their endorsements for the November 2021 elections. This includes endorsements for Governor, New Jersey Senate, New Jersey Assembly, and local political offices. The list includes a variety of candidates across different districts, representing a wide range of political backgrounds and perspectives. The endorsements reflect the organization’s commitment to supporting candidates who align with their values and priorities.
40TH DISTRICT

INCUMBENTS KRISTIN CORRADO,
CHRISTOPHER DEPHILLIPS, KEVIN ROONEY

No Legislative district in the state has gone longer without electing a Democrat than the 40th, which includes parts of Bergen, Passaic, Morris and Essex counties. It’s been 56 years since a Democrat won an Assembly seat in the area of North Jersey.

The district is not as Republican as it was in an era where Ridgewood and Wyckoff were staunch red municipalities, but Wayne, Franklin Lakes, and Totowa – home to one of the few local GOP machines remaining in New Jersey – are still enough to stem any possible tide. Donald Trump won the district twice, albeit by just a handful of votes last year.

The senator from the 40th is State Sen. Kristin Corrado (R-Totowa), who won a 2017 special election convention for Senate after Kevin O’Toole (R-Cedar Grove) left to become chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and won the 2017 GOP primary by a powerful 2-1 margin against former Assembly Majority Leader Paul DiGaetano. Corrado then won the general election for a full four-year term with 56% against Democrat Thomas Duch, a former assemblyman.

Corrado is the last Republican to win a countywide election in Passaic County. She was elected County Clerk in 2009 by over 3,000 votes in a year when the top of the ticket, gubernatorial candidate Chris Christie, lost Passaic to incumbent Jon Corzine – and was politically adept enough to be re-elected in 2014.

Until State Sen. Holly Schepisi (R-River Vale) won the 39th district seat last March, Corrado had been the only Republican woman in the State Senate. She serves as Republican Conference Chair and is one of the four GOP members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Corrado was mentioned as a possible candidate for lieutenant governor this year, but she wasn’t interested.

Assemblyman Christopher DePhillips (R-Wyckoff) is seeking his third term in the Assembly, where he has emerged as a serious lawmaker with some major policy chops. He’s been around politics for a while – he spent a couple of years in the late 1980s working in Washington as a staffer to Rep. Marge Roukema – and he’s a former Wyckoff mayor.

The other assemblyman from the district, Kevin Rooney (R-Wyckoff), also served as the mayor of Wyckoff, and was appointed to the legislature in 2016.

Democrats are running Ridgewood Deputy Mayor Michael Sedon against Corrado. Former Assistant Bergen County Prosecutor Genevieve Allard, a teacher, and Waldwick Councilwoman Nicole McNamara are taking on DePhillips and Rooney.

NJ-40

Counts: Bergen, Essex, Morris, Passaic
Bergen: Allendale, Franklin Lakes, Ho-Ho-Kus, Midland Park, Ridgewood, Waldwick, Wyckoff
Essex: Cedar Grove
Morris: Pequannock, Riverdale
Passaic: Little Falls, Pompton Lakes, Totowa, Wayne, Woodland Park

Senate Rating: Solid R
Assembly Rating: Solid R
2021 SENATE: *KRISTIN CORRADO // MICHAEL SEDON
2021 ASSEM: *CHRISTOPHER DEPHILLIPS, *KEVIN ROONEY // GENEVIEVE ALLARD, NICOLE MCNAMARA

2020 PRES: TRUMP 49.4% // BIDEN 49.4%
2017 GOV: GUADAGNO 51.9% // MURPHY 48.1%
2016 PRES: TRUMP 52.0% // CLINTON 44.9%
2012 PRES: ROMNEY 55.4% // OBAMA 43.7%

2017 SENATE: *CORRADO 56.2% // DUCH 43.8%
2019 ASSEM: *ROONEY 28.4%, *DEPHILLIPS 27.6% // O’BRIEN 22.1%, CORDONNIER 21.8%

VOTER REG: DEMOCRATIC 29.5%, REPUBLICAN 32.1%, UNAFFILIATED 37.6%

POPULATION: 218,353 (-13,872)
RACE: 3.8% WHITE, 2.2% BLACK, 12.4% HISPANIC, 8.3% ASIAN